THE ASCETICAL DOCTRINE OF SAINT JEROME

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DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE DEPARTMENT
OF CLASSICS AT FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

NEW YORK
1966

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

May 10 19 66

This dissertation prepared under my direction by

Ignatius S. Kozik, S.D.B.

entitled The Ascetical Doctrine of Saint Jerome

has been accepted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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PREFACE

Once Jerome settled permanently at Bethlehem, he devoted himself with zeal to a life of prayer and scriptural study--the ideal which he had proposed to himself ten years earlier when he began his ascetic novitiate in the desert of Chalcis. From his monastery in Bethlehem, he continued to be the champion and the apostle of the ascetic life. Many of his letters were written with a view to exhorting his friends to embrace or to continue a life of evangelical perfection, and contain detailed instruction on the obligations and virtues of monks, virgins, and widows. Christians from all quarters of the Empire corresponded with him, requesting spiritual advice or a rule of life. And the monk of Bethlehem would send his instructions and exhortations to Italy and Gaul, as well as to Spain and Africa. Even the great bishop of Hippo (*Ep*. 101.3, *CSEL* 55.234) yearned to make the long trip to Palestine, that he might enjoy frequent and pleasant conversation (*crebrum et dulce conloquium*) with his learned and revered fellow priest. Thus, as Ferdinand Cavallera observes, it was Jerome's spiritual direction that was uppermost in the minds of his contemporaries, who admired him as the great teacher of Christian perfection. In the words of Cassian (De Incarnatione Domini 7.26, CSEL 17.384), Jerome exercised the role of a "teacher of Catholics, whose writings, like so many divine lights, shone brightly throughout the world." In our own day, Paul Antin, who is recognized as one of the leading authorities on Hieronymian works, has declared that Jerome is un des très grands maîtres dans la direction morale.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the ascetical doctrine of St. Jerome. Although he has not handed down in one work his complete ascetical teaching, still it is possible to draw from his letters, treatises, and homilies a body of precepts and counsels regarding Christian perfection. For this purpose all his principal ascetical writings are examined, namely, his Epistulae, Opuscula, Homiliae, and Vitae. For the Epistulae I have used Hilberg's text in the Vienna Corpus (Vienna, 1910-1918) and consulted the edition of Labourt in the Budé series (Paris, 1949-1963). Jerome's Opuscula and Vitae (with the exception of the Vita Malchi) are cited according to Migne's reprint of Vallarsi's second edition of the Opera Omnia (Venice, 1766-1771). As is well known, the pagination in the various Migne reprints tends to differ widely; in this study reference is made to the printing of 1865. Dom Morin's edition of the Homiliae in the Corpus Christianorum, vol. 78 (Turnhout, 1958), has been employed. Jerome's Commentaries on the Minor Prophets and on the Pauline Epistles are cited according to the Migne printing of 1865 and 1866, respectively. For Jerome's Commentaries on the Major Prophets I have used the editions available in the Corpus Christianorum (vols. 73-75A, Turnhout, 1960-1964).

For the chronology of Jerome's life and works I have followed Cavallera's dating, but in cases of disagreement I have also consulted the opinions of Angelo Penna.

I am sincerely grateful for the privilege of writing this study under the direction of the Reverend Herbert Musurillo, S.J. I am also indebted to the Reverend Rudolph Arbesmann, O.S.A., for his careful reading of the manuscript and for making valuable suggestions.

ABBREVIATIONS

AAS	Acta Apostolicae Sedis
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
AER	American Ecclesiastical Review
BALAC	Bulletin d'ancienne littérature et d'archéologie chrétienne
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CC	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CE	The Catholic Encyclopedia
CL	Classical Journal
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CUPS	Catholic University of America Patristic Studies
DACL	Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie
DHGE	Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques
DB	Dictionnaire de la Bible
DCB	Dictionary of Christian Biography
DSp	Dictionnaire de spiritualité d'ascétique et de mystique
DTC	Dictionnaire de théologie catholique
EC	Enciclopedia Cattolica
ERE	Harper's Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics
FC	The Fathers of the Church
FlP	Florilegium patristicum
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
NPN	A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series

PG	Patrologia Graeca (J. P. Migne, Patrologiae Cursus Completus)
PL	Patrologia Latina (J. P. Migne, Patrologiae Cursus Completus)
RAC	Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum
RAM	Revue d'ascétique et de mystique
RBn	Revue Bénédictine
SCA	Studies in Christian Antiquity
SChr	Sources chrétiennes
TAPA	Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association
TLL	Thesaurus linguae Latinae
TS	Theological Studies
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
VChr	Vigiliae Christianae
ZNTW	Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche

CHAPTER I

THE PRINCIPAL ASCETICAL WRITINGS OF ST. JEROME

Since the present study will deal with the ascetical doctrine of St. Jerome, it seems desirable to begin with a short survey of his principal ascetical writings, which will provide the necessary historical background.[1]

Jerome's principal ascetical writings can be divided into four groups: Epistulae, Opuscula, Homiliae, and Vitae.

A. Epistulae

Jerome has written numerous letters; he himself made several collections, thus becoming the first editor and publisher of his own letters.[2] Not all of them, however, have come down to us. He tells us, for example, that he does not know how many letters he had written to Paula and Eustochium, "because they are written daily."

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[1] See P. Antin, "Saint Jérôme," Théologie de la vie monastique (Paris, 1961), p. 197: "Saint Jérôme n'a nulle parte un exposé systématique de sa monachologie."

[2] See De viris inl. 135 (Richardson, p. 55): "Epistularum ad diversos librum unum ... Ad Marcellam epistularum librum unum."

This is sufficient evidence of the loss of additional letters.[3] The extant correspondence corpus, as found in Hilberg's edition,[4] comprises 154 items, of which only 120 or 121 are genuinely Hieronymian letters.[5] Among these we find an important group concerned with various aspects of the ascetic life, which during the fourth century had become one of the favored forms of Christian piety.[6] To this group, then, belong the ascetical letters, in which Jerome explains some point of his spiritual doctrine, or exhorts his friends to embrace the practice of the perfect life. He himself styles them "letters of exhortation"--*litterae exhortatoriae*.[7] Cavallera enumerates seventeen principal ascetical letters, most of them quite extensive.[8] They may be classified according to the following special topics:

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[3] *De viris inl*. 135 (Richardson, p. 56): "Epistularum autem ad Paulam et Eustochium quia cotidie scribuntur, incertus est numerus."

[4] I. Hilberg, *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, *CSEL* 54-56 (Vienna, 1910-1918).

[5] Of the remaining 34 letters, 16 are addressed to Jerome and 14 are documents. Three letters--148, 149, 150--are undoubtedly pseudo-Hieronymian. Letters 18A (*Ad Damasum*) and 18B (*Ad Damasum*) are given separately by Hilberg. See J. Labourt, *Saint Jérôme: Lettres* I (Paris, 1949), Introd., p. XLI; C. C. Mierow, *The Letters of St. Jerome* I, *ACW* 33 (Westminster, Md., 1963), Introd., pp. 5, 12-18.

[6] See W. Jaeger, *Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius* (Leiden, 1954), p. 14.

[7] For example, he regarded his letter to Heliodorus (*Ep*. 14) as "a letter of exhortation." See *De viris inl*. 135 (Richardson, p. 55): "Ad Heliodorum exhortatoriam," and *Ep*. 52.1 (*CSEL* 54.414): "Scripsi ad avunculum tuum, sanctum Heliodorum, exhortatoriam epistulam."

Exhortation to the Ascetical Life
(a) *Ep*. 14: Ad Heliodorum
(b) *Ep*. 58: Ad Paulinum
(c) *Ep*. 118: Ad Iulianum
(d) *Ep*. 125: Ad Rusticum
(e) *Ep*. 145: Ad Exuperantium

Renunciation -- *Ep*. 120.1: Ad Hedybiam

Virginity
(a) *Ep*. 22: Ad Eustochium
(b) *Ep*. 130: Ad Demetriadem

Education of a Virgin
(a) *Ep*. 107: Ad Laetam
(b) *Ep*. 128: Ad Pacatulam

Clerical Life -- *Ep*. 52: Ad Nepotianum

Chaste Widowhood
(a) *Ep*. 54: Ad Furiam
(b) *Ep*. 79: Ad Salvinam
(c) *Ep*. 123: Ad Geruchiam

Marriage
(b) *Ep*. 117: Ad Matrem et Filiam
(b) *Ep*. 122: Ad Rusticum

Penance -- *Ep*. 147: Ad Sabinianum

In Jerome's letters we do not find a consistent and logical exposition of his ascetical teaching. Antin compares the process of his thinking to the zigzag thrusts of a masterful fencer. It is subtle, impulsive, seldom confining itself to a fixed plan (*à un plan méthodique*).[9]

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[8] F. Cavallera, "S. Jérôme et la vie parfaite," *RAM* 2 (1921), 102-103.

[9] P. Antin, *Essai sur Saint Jérôme* (Paris, 1951), p. 133.

Jerome's remark in the letter to his friends of Aquileia that "love knows no rules of order," may be equally applied to his ascetical letters.[10]

Many of the ascetical letters, addressed to particular correspondents, were intended also for a wider reading public.[11] While composing the letter to Eustochium, for example, Jerome undoubtedly kept in mind also the Christian public of Rome.[12] Though epistolary in form, these letters were real treatises. Jerome himself, for example, styles the letter to Heliodorus both as *epistula*[13] and *liber*,[14] while the letter to Eustochium he expressly calls "a treatise" (*libellum*),[15] and speaks of the letter to Rusticus as an *opusculum*.[16] Hence, such letters had as their aim not only to establish intimate communication with individuals, but also to serve as circulars with the function of the modern printed lectures and addresses. Thus the letter form was often used by Jerome as a literary type.[17]

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[10] *Ep*. 7.6 (*CSEL* 54.31): "Amor ordinem nescit."

[11] See D. Gorce, *Lettres spirituelles de saint Jérôme* I (Paris, 1932), p. 11.

[12] See Antin, *op. cit*., p. 85: "Et pensons qu'au delà de cette jeune destinataire Jérôme vise tout le public chrétien."

[13] *Ep*. 52.1 (*CSEL* 54.414).

[14] *Ep*. 77.9 (*CSEL* 55.46): "Librum, quo Heliodorum . . . cohortatus sum." For a list of letters which Jerome designates as *libri*, see E. Arns, *La technique du livre d'après Saint Jérôme* (Paris, 1953), p. 100.

[15] *Ep*. 52.17 (*CSEL* 56.440). Jerome uses the term *libellus* by preference to designate his treatises in epistolary form.

[16] *Ep*. 125.17 (*CSEL* 56.136). Cf. Arns, *op. cit*., pp. 106-107.

Even during Jerome's lifetime his letters were exchanged, copied, and even learned by heart, as in the case of the celebrated Roman matron, Fabiola, who committed to memory Jerome's letter to Heliodorus.[18]

1. Promoter of the Cenobitic Life

In letter 14 Jerome strongly urges his friend Heliodorus to come to the East and dedicate himself to the ascetical life in the desert of Chalcis.[19] Severance of all family ties, that is, complete renunciation, was to become "the cornerstone of Jerome's spiritual direction."[20] This letter offers us the earliest excellent example. It had considerable success. Years later, however, writing to Nepotian, the nephew of Heliodorus, and recalling this earliest "letter of exhortation," Jerome accused himself of "having embellished some parts of it with the flowery language of the schools."[21] "In spite of the flowers of rhetoric," Monceaux observes, "the letter to Heliodorus is the finest panegyric of the desert and the anchorite's life in the whole history of Christian asceticism."[22]

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[17] See H. Jordan, Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur (Leipzig, 1911), p. 167.

[18] Ep. 77.9 (CSEL 55.46): "Librum . . . memoria tenebat."

[19] Ibid.: "Librum, quo Heliodorum quondam iuvenis ad heremum cohortatus sum."

[20] E. P. Burke, "St. Jerome as a Spiritual Director," A Monument to St. Jerome (New York, 1952), p. 150.

Jerome's moving appeal failed to persuade Heliodorus to take up the life of a hermit, for he became a priest and later the first bishop of Altinum.[23] Jerome himself, after his departure from Chalcis, was forced to change his mode of life. But this change was more in appearance than in reality, for, both as spiritual director at Rome and as monastic superior at Bethlehem, he would be continually dedicated to a life of asceticism and complete detachment from the world.

Concerning his ascetic ideal Jerome left us a very interesting letter[24] composed for the benefit of a young Gaul, Rusticus, who is probably to be identified with the future bishop of Narbonne.[25] After the death of his father, Rusticus was reared and taught by his own saintly mother. Later as a young man he studied in the flourishing academies of Gaul.[26] Sparing no expense, his mother sent him to Rome to study rhetoric, thus enabling him to receive a sound liberal education.[27] Soon he renounced his possessions[28] and began to lead a life of an ascetic.[29] It was at this time that he wrote to Jerome to ask for advice concerning his vocation. In his treatise Jerome counsels the young recruit to live in a community of religious men, and draws up rules, full of wisdom and moderation, for the spiritual training of a monk.

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[21] _Ep_. 52.1 (_CSEL_ 54.414): "Quaedam scolastico flore depinximus."

[22] P. Monceaux, _Saint Jérôme: sa jeunesse, l'étudiant, l'ermite_ (Paris, 1932), pp. 183-184. F. Cavallera (_Saint Jérôme: sa vie et son oeuvre_ [Paris, 1922], 2.154) had called it "éloge de vie érémitique."

[23] See J. Fraiken, "Altino," _DHGE_ II.822.

[24] _Ep_. 125 (_CSEL_ 56.118-142).

[25] See Cavallera, _op_. _cit_., 1.320, note 2.

According to Jerome, the monastery--cenobium--is both a school and a training camp. The art of ascetical life must be learned with the aid of a teacher.[30] Even dumb animals follow leaders of their own (ductores suos). Rusticus, therefore, should not be left to his own discretion, but rather live in a monastery under the direction of one superior,[31] whom he will fear as a master and love as a father. From his companions he will learn different virtues: humility from one, patience from another. This one will teach him silence, that one meekness.[32] The monastery is also a training camp (ludus), where the monk trains himself for the hardships of the solitary life. Like the soldier or the athlete, he must above all learn to endure blows. Great physical strength is not required for spiritual combat. "The philosopher of Christ" (philosophus Christi) need not be a Milo. Health is necessary, but not excessive strength.[33] At the monastery the Christian soldier will live under a rule, that is, eat what is served, wear the clothes provided, perform the work assigned, and take his turn in psalm-singing. There he will learn to practice humility and obedience, endure hunger, take pleasure in poverty, perform works of charity, and teach virtue by his example.[34]

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[26] Ep. 125.6 (CSEL 56.123).

[27] Ibid. (CSEL 56.127).

[28] Ibid., 7 (CSEL 56.124).

[29] Ibid., 9 (CSEL 56.127): "In adulescentia iugum Christi collo imposuit."

[30] Ibid. (CSEL 56.133): "Nulla ars absque magistro discitur." See ibid. (CSEL 56.128): "Nec ipse te doceas."

[31] Ibid. (CSEL 56.133).

Jerome points out that a strictly solitary life exposes the ascetic to manifold illusions. When one sets out on a new journey, he needs a guide (ductor), otherwise he may easily take off in a wrong direction and make the mistake of going too far or not far enough.[35] He points out also the dangers of the solitary life. In solitude pride may quickly creep in. The ascetic who has fasted for some time may begin to consider himself a person of importance and to look down on others as his inferiors. There is the added danger of doing one's will at all times and attaching one's heart to material possessions.[36] Jerome relates that when a number of holy abbots, "who were truly fathers" (qui vere patres sunt), saw some inexperienced youths proudly run off to the desert before going through a monastery, they went in search of them and brought them back to the monasteries, where they could help them get rid of their pride.[37]

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[32] Ep. 125.15 (CSEL 56.134).

[33] Adv. Iovin. 2.11 (PL 23.314-315).

[34] Ep. 125.9 (CSEL 56.128).

[35] Ibid. (Migne, PL 22.1077): "Nec absque ductore [Hilberg: doctore] ingrediaris viam, quam numquam ingressus es."

Does this mean, then, that Jerome disapproves of the solitary life? His reply is emphatic. "What then? Do I disapprove of the solitary life (solitariam vitam)? Not at all. I have often commended it." However, he strongly counsels life in a community. He tells Rusticus: "I would prefer you to have the society of holy men, and not to be your own teacher."[38] The ascetic, therefore, must first undergo a preliminary training and give proof of a holy life for a length of time (multo tempore).

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[36] Ep. 125.9 (CSEL 56.128).

[37] Tract de obedientia (CC 78.555).

[38] Ep. 126.9 (CSEL 56.127-128): "Mihi placet, ut habeas sanctorum contubernium nec ipse te doceas."

Finally, after such a term of probation under rule, the monk will march forth from the monastic training camp (*de ludo monasteriorum*) prepared for a life of solitude.[39] In the final analysis, therefore, Jerome does not disdain the eremitical life, but since he had experienced its difficulties and dangers in the desert of Chalcis, he unhesitatingly prefers the *cenobium*, that is, community life, at least for the majority of monks.

2. Defender of Virginity

In 384 Jerome dedicated Letter 22 to Eustochium, the third daughter of the noble Roman widow named Paula.[40] It is his longest letter of ascetical direction and the most famous of his entire correspondence. From her childhood Eustochium wished to consecrate her virginity to Christ, but her uncle Hymetius, together with his wife Praetextata, made every effort to undermine her preference for a life of virginity (*virginitatis propositum*).[41] Nevertheless, she persevered in her resolve with the help of her mother's example and the training of Marcella, a noble Roman lady.[42]

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[39] *Ep*. 126.9 (*CSEL* 56.128).

[40] In his *Epitaphium Paulae* (*Ep*. 108.4, *CSEL* 55. 309-310), Jerome lists all five of Paula's children, placing Eustochium third. Since her father was a descendant of the Iulii, Eustochium was also named *Iulia*.

[41] See *Ep*. 107.5 (*CSEL* 55.296).

[42] See *Ep*. 127.5 (*CSEL* 56.149): "in huius [Marcellae] nutrita cubiculo Eustochium."

Jerome reminds her that she is the first woman of high rank in the city of Rome to embrace the life of virginity.[43] However, in his treatise he will avoid all flattery, all display of rhetorical speech, that would set her among the angels and put the world beneath her feet.[44] Though for the present he eschews all flattery, in later letters he employs expressions of high praise for the Roman virgin.[45]

This lengthy letter is more a booklet than an ordinary letter. Jerome himself describes it as a "treatise on virginity" (virginitatis libello),[46] and in his bibliography he entitles it Libellus de virginitate servanda[47]--the title which he employs again in his letter to Demetrias.[48] It was to warn Eustochium, who lived amidst the luxury of a wealthy home, of the dangers of life upon which she was entering[49] that he wrote this letter, which amounts to a treatise on the motivations and rules of conduct for a life of virginity. As he explained to Demetrias thirty years later, he felt constrained to oppose certain vices and to lay bare the wiles of the devil (*diaboli insidias*) for the instruction and warning of his virgin disciple.[50]

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[43] Ep. 22.15 (CSEL 54.162): "Quae . . . prima Romanae urbis virgo nobilis esse coepisti."

[44] Ibid., 2 (CSEL 54.146).

[45] See e.g., Ep. 66.2 (CSEL 54.640); Ep. 108.4 (CSEL 55.310): "Virginitatis et ecclesiae monile pretiosissimum"; Ep. 127.5 (CSEL 56.149): "Eustochium virginitatis decus." About two years after her death Palladius testifies to her widespread reputation for modesty. See Hist. Laus., 41 (Butler, 2.128).

[46] Ep. 52.17 (CSEL 54.440): "Lapidato iam virginitatis libello, quem sanctae Eustochiae scripseram." See note 15 above.

[47] De viris inl., 135 (Richardson, p. 55).

[48] Ep. 130.19 (CSEL 56.200): "Ante annos circiter triginta de virginitate servanda edidi librum." In his Apology (2.5, CC 20.86), Rufinus styles it "libellum de conservanda virginitate." According to Antin, it seems that the title of one of John Chrysostom's ascetical treatises suggested to Jerome the title for his own libellus. See Antin, "Eustochium," DSp 4.1717; J. Dumortier, "La date des deux traités de Saint Jean Chrysostome

Jerome exposes the false piety of some virgins and ascetics, and satirizes the worldly spirit that had infected the Christian society of Rome during the fourth century. He warns Eustochium not to belong to that class of ascetics who seek glory by avoiding it.[51] Some try to win praise by the rags they wear; others, when they come into a gathering of fellow ascetics, sit down on a lowly footstool and pretend they are unworthy; still others lower their voice as if they were exhausted by fasting, or lean on someone's shoulders, imitating the walk of a person failing in health.[52]

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aux Moines et aux Vierges," *Mélanges de science religieuse* 61 (1949), 247-252.

[49] *Ep*. 22.29 (*CSEL* 54.187): "Memento, quoniam in medio laqueorum ambulas."

[50] *Ep*. 130.9 (*CSEL* 56.200).

[51] *Ep*. 22.27 (*CSEL* 54.183): "Ne gloriam fugiendo quaeras."

[52] *Ibid*. (*CSEL* 54.184).

The most bitter attack Jerome directs against sham and hypocritical virgins. "They wish not to be, but simply to appear virgins," he explains.[53] Many of these, he observes sadly, become widowed before they are wed; some even go so far as to resort to abortion by the use of drugs. When death results, they become guilty of three crimes: suicide, adultery against Christ (_Christi_ _adulterae_) and murder of an unborn child.[54] Virgins of this sort make themselves conspicuous in the crowd by their gait and dress, and by the throng of young admirers. "This is all that their virginity amounts to," Jerome remarks ironically.[55] They are accustomed to heap scorn on the virgin who is faithful to her profession, calling her "an unfortunate girl" (_misera_), or, "a recluse" (_monacha_). At times they hurl at her the epithet "Manichee." "Rightly so," snaps Jerome, "for according to their belief fasting is a heresy."[56] He rejoices that he is unpopular with this party of false and guilty virgins,[57] who deserve to be hissed (explosis) and banished.[58] They are the real menace to the good name of true asceticism and to the future development of ascetical life in Rome. It is not surprising, therefore, that Jerome takes the bull by the horns and decides to slip occasional caricatures of these hypocrites into his *libellus*. Dreading the triumph of unworthy ascetic ideals in his beloved Rome, he unleashes a mordant attack on the sham and shame of the enemies of asceticism.

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[53] _Ep_. 22.15 (_CSEL_ 54.162): "Quae nolunt esse virgines, sed videri." See _Ep_. 125.7 (_CSEL_ 56.124): "Tu vero, si monachus esse vis, non videri."

[54] _Ep_. 22.13 (_CSEL_ 54.160).

[55] _Ibid_. (_CSEL_ 54.161): "Haec est apud illas tota virginitas."

[56] _Ibid_.: "Et consequenter; tali enim proposito ieiunium heresis est."

[57] _Ibid_.: "Libenter talibus non placemus."

When he scathingly condemns the *agapetae*,[59] he is not playing the role of a "misogynous polemicist,"[60] but simply attacking a scandalous and disgraceful practice, which, without mincing words, he declares a curse (*pestis agapetarum*). And the so-called *agapetae*, "who seek spiritual solace among strangers," he brands as "one-man harlots" (*meretrices univirae*).[61] His remark to Furia, a young Roman widow, could well serve as a rejoinder to those who were shocked by his freedom of language. He wrote: "I prefer to see your modesty rather than my cause exposed to some danger."[62]

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[58] *Ep*. 22.15 (*CSEL* 54.162).

[59] See H. Leclercq, "Mariage spirituel," *DACL* 10.1881-1888; H. Achelis, "Agapetae," *ERE* 1.177-180.

[60] D. S. Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist* (Ithaca, 1964), p. 123.

[61] *Ep*. 22.14 (*CSEL* 54.161). Referring to this context of Jerome's letter, Sulpicius Severus (*Dialogus* I.9, *CSEL* 1.160) remarks: "Ceterum de familiaritatibus virginum et monachorum atque etiam clericorum, quam vera, quam fortia disputavit! Unde a quibusdam, quos nominare nolo, dicitur non amari."

Evidently Paula and Eustochium were not scandalized by Jerome's language; they were not offended by his satire. When he left Rome, they followed him to Palestine. Surely these noble souls knew the character and personality of their spiritual director far better than the modern reader can know him from the cold text of his written words. One can hardly believe that they knew him in life as a coarse, scurrilous ascetic.[63]

In view of the fact that Jerome was writing to Eustochium, "then a girl of some fourteen years," Wiesen judges his language "highly injudicious."[64] Jerome's great biographers, however, give us a far different calculation:

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[62] Ep. 54.10 (CSEL 54.447): "Malo apud te, filia, verecundia parumper quam causa periclitari."

[63] Cavallera (op. cit., 1.108, note 2) finds "exagérations intolérables" in the letter. As proof he quotes two passages: Ep. 22.13 (CSEL 54.160): "Videas plerasque viduas ante quam nuptas") and ibid., 32 (ibid., 193: "At nunc plerasque videas armaria stipare vestibus"). The term pleraeque, however, need not necessarily have the meaning of "very many" or "most"; it may simply mean "many" (multae). The latter use may be found in Adv. Iovin. 1.10 (PL 23.234) and Ep. 130.17 (CSEL 56.197). See H. Goelzer, Etude lexicographique et grammaticale de la latinité de S. Jérôme (Paris, 1884), p. 264.

[64] Wiesen, op. cit., p. 170. See P. de Labriolle, "De la liberté du langage dans les écrits chrétiens primitifs," BALAC 4 (1914), 115.

Cavallera puts Eustochium's age at sixteen, and Grützmacher makes her even two years older.[65] Admittedly Jerome judged her mature enough at the time, for he allowed her to attend the Biblical lectures which he delivered at the home of Marcella.

At Rome this libellus provoked a storm of criticism and hostility against the author. Even ten years later, writing to Nepotian, Jerome will refer to this criticism as "a shower of stones."[66] According to Rufinus the pagan society of Rome chuckled with delight at the merciless satire of the worldly virgins and ascetics. He himself will denounce Jerome for having defamed the whole Church with his foul accusations.[67] However, there's no doubt that Jerome's defense of virginity and the ascetic life must have had a salutary and durable influence on the religious life of Christian Rome.[68] Soon the libellus became a classic (un classique) in ascetico-monastic literature.[69]

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[65] Cavallera, op. cit., 1.109: "la jeune patricienne de seize ans"; G. Grützmacher, Hieronymus: Eine biographische Studie zur alten Kirchengeschichte (Berlin, 1906), 2.251, note 1: "Sie . . . wurde also, als Hieronymus 384 den Brief über die Jungfrauschaft schrieb, erst 18 Jahre."

[66] See note 46 above.

[67] Apologia 2.5 (CC 20.86-87): "Libellum quendam de conservanda virginitate Romae positus scripsit, quem libellum omnes pagani . . . certatim sibi describebant. . . . universamque pariter foedissimis exprobationibus infamavit ecclesiam."

[68] See Cavallera, op. cit., 1.109.

[69] See Antin, "Eustochium," DSp 4.1717. For quotations of Ep. 22 in medieval ascetical writings, see Antin, loc. cit.

B. OPUSCULA

At the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century, the prevailing attitude of the cultured pagans toward the Christian ascetics was one of aversion and contempt.[1] Even in some Christian circles of the West there arose a strong opposition to the ascetic movement of that period. At Milan, St. Ambrose received with joy the news that Paulinus of Aquitaine, second to none in distinction of birth, and his wife Therasia decided to bid farewell to home, country, and kindred, in order to serve God with greater zeal and consecrate themselves to the ascetic life.[2] But the bishop fully realized with what outbursts of indignation that holy decision would be greeted by the leading citizens of Milan. The Saint remarks: The citizens "call it a shameful thing for a Christian to change his apparel out of devotion to his holy religion."[3]

About two decades later the anonymous author of the

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[1] See P. de Labriolle, "De la mort de Théodose a l'élection de Grégoire le Grand," in A. Fliche and V. Martin, Histoire de l'Eglise (Paris, 1937), 4.94; A. Momigliano (ed.), The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century (Oxford, 1963).

[2] Ambrose, Ep. 58.1 (PL 16.1228).

[3] Ibid., 3 (PL 16.1229): "Si forte Christianus vir attentior sacrosanctae religioni vestem mutaverit, indignum facinus appellant."

Consultationes Zaccaei et Apollonii[4] has the converted Apollonius express surprise that even among Christians the ascetics are objects of aversion.[5] In reply Zacchaeus, the Christian, points out that there are various classes of monks which are not equal in merit. Some who boast of being monks bring discredit upon that name by their wrong attitude.[6] However, he fully recognizes that the institution itself is good and expresses his admiration for the heavenly life the monks lead on earth.[7] Even Apollonius agrees that the life of virginity and chastity is sublimely meritorious, for it is an imitation of the angelic life.[8]

During his stay at Rome, on several occasions Jerome witnessed the open hostility of Christian groups toward the ascetics. When Paula and Melanium began to dedicate themselves to prayer, fasting, and good works,[9] Christians were to be found who openly criticized them, tearing to pieces their new mode of life (sanctum propositum).[10] The untimely death of Blesilla, Paula's eldest daughter, which occurred a few months after her conversion to the ascetic life, gave the enemies an opportunity for expressing publicly their hostility to the ascetics.[11] They considered the young widow's austerities, advocated by Jerome, as the cause of her death.[12] During the funeral procession, Paula wept and shrieked with such unrestrained grief, that it seemed she was being tortured by flaming torches. Finally she collapsed in a faint behind the gold-draped catafalque. At the sight of the distraught mother, the crowd began to mutter angry and bitter remarks. "This detestable breed of ascetics! What are we waiting for? Why not drive them out of the City? Why not stone them to death? Why not hurl them into the river?"[13]

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[4] B. Altaner, Patrology (New York, 1960), p. 422. G. Morin was the first to attribute the work to the pagan convert Firmicus Maternus; see "Ein zweites christliches Werk des Firmicus Maternus: die Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii," Historisches Jahrbuch 37 (1916), 229-266.

[5] Consultationes Zaccaei et Apollonii III.3 (FlP 39.100): "Quam ob causam etiam nostrorum odiis digni [monachi] habeantur, exprome. Qui utique, si honesta sectantur, neque a fidei unitate dissentiunt, imitandi sunt potius quam vitandi."

[6] Ibid.: "Multiplex enim observantiae istius forma est ac sub uno propositi nomine diversa genera monachorum . . . ut propter morum varietatem sit etiam diversitas voluntatum."

[7] Ibid. (FlP 39.102): "Haec monachorum diversitas, et talis spiritaliter degentium caelestis in terris agitur disciplina."

[8] Ibid., 6 (FlP 39.107): "Et ego sciebam, virginitatis continentiaeque propositum meriti esse sublimis . . . dum . . . vitam angelicae dignitatis vel conversationis imitantur."

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[9] See Ep. 45.4 (CSEL 54.325-6).

[10] Ibid. (CSEL 54.326).

[11] For the story of Blesilla's conversion, see Ep. 38 (CSEL 54.289-293); for Jerome's tribute to her memory, see Ep. 39 (ibid., 293-308).

[12] Ep. 39.6 (CSEL 54.306): "Dolet [Paula] filiam ieiuniis interfectam."

[13] Ibid.: "Quousque genus detestabile monachorum non urbe pellitur, non lapidibus obruitur, non praecipitatur in fluctus?"

Soon the anti-ascetic spirit began to manifest itself at Rome even in literary works. Three principal antagonists arose in the second half of the fourth century; all three became the targets of Jerome's violent polemics. The literary antagonists were: Helvidius, Jovinian, and Vigilantius. Of this triad Jovinian proved the most dangerous, for in this reactionary ascetic the opponents of asceticism found a powerful champion of their cause.

1. *Adversus Helvidium*

During Jerome's second sojourn in Rome,[14] a certain layman, Helvidius by name,[15] published a treatise (*libellum*)[16] in which he dared to assail the perpetual virginity of the Mother of God.[17] Cavallera asserts that Helvidius possibly directed his refutation against a writing of a certain Carterius, mentioned by Jerome,[18] who had composed a defense of the ascetical life in which the perpetual virginity of Mary was introduced as an example.[19] Basing himself on the Gospels and appealing to the authority of Tertullian and Victorinus of Pettau,[20] Helvidius attempted to prove that not even Mary preserved perpetual virginity, for after the birth of Christ--*post partum*--she lived an ordinary married life and had a number of children. He argued that if virginity were a great treasure in the sight of God, Mary would have preserved it all her life. But she did not do so; virginity, therefore, is not to be considered as more excellent than matrimony. Indirectly Helvidius sought to discredit the ascetical life, which, essentially, was based on celibacy and virginity.[21]

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[14] From 382 to 385; see Cavallera, *op. cit.*, 1.155. Helvidius also was living in Rome when Jerome was writing the treatise against him, but it seems they never met. See *Adv. Helvid.* 16 (*PL* 23.210): "Ego ipse, qui contra te scribo, cum in eadem tecum urbe consistam, albus, ut aiunt, aterve sis, nescio."

[15] *Ibid.*, 1 (*PL* 23.193): "Solus in universo mundo sibi et laicus et sacerdos." M. Schanz (*Geschichte der römischen Literatur* [Munich, 1914], 4.474) states: "Aus den Worten . . . muss man schliessen, dass er Laie war." Gennadius makes him a disciple of Auxentius, the Arian bishop of Milan; see *De viris inl.* 33 (Richardson, p. 73).

[16] *Adv. Helvid.* 1 (*PL* 23.193). The work is no longer extant, but several quoted passages have been preserved in Jerome's treatise. See however Cavallera, *op. cit.*, 1.95, note 2.

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[17] Jerome charges Helvidius with "impiety" (*Adv. Helvid*. 4) and "blasphemy" (*ibid*., 16: "Quis, te oro, ante hanc blasphemiam noverat?"). By using his "barking eloquence" (*caninam facundiam*) against the Mother of Christ, he has defiled "the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit" and become "notorious by crime." See *Adv. Helvid*. 16 (*PL* 23.210): "Tu contaminasti sanctuarium Spiritus sancti . . . nobilis es factus in scelere."

[18] *Ibid*.: "Non quaero eloquentiam; quam ipse non habens, in fratre Craterio requisisti."

[19] See Cavallera, *op. cit*., 1.95: "Il semble qu'on moine bien intentionné, nommé Carterius, avait composé non sans maladresse une apologie de la vie monastique, où était citée en exemple la perpétuelle virginité de Marie."

[20] *Adv. Helvid*. 17 (*PL* 23.211). Jerome refused to admit the authority of Tertullian, for he no longer was "Ecclesiae homo," and claimed that Helvidius had misunderstood the testimony of Victorinus, the bishop of Pettau. See *ibid*.: "De Victorino vero id assero, quod et de evangelistis, fratres eum dixisse Domini, non filios Mariae. Fratres eo sensu, quem superius exposuimus, propinquitate, non natura."

Being entreated by some ascetics to undertake a refutation, Jerome at first declined[22] to enter a controversy against an "illiterate opponent."[23] When, however, Helvidius' teaching began to cause some uneasiness and even scandal, especially in the ascetic circles of Rome,[24] Jerome penned a forceful treatise against the defamer of the Mother of God, which he entitled *Adversus Helvidium de Mariae virginitate perpetua*.[25] He refuted the scriptural arguments of his opponent with so much logic and authority, that the heretic was silenced.[26] Moreover, he claimed that he could marshal against him the unanimous teaching of Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Justin the Martyr, and others.[27]

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[21] See P. Pourrat, *La spiritualité chrétienne* (Paris, 1919), 1.240.

[22] *Adv. Helvid*. 1 (*PL* 23.193): "Nuper rogatus a fratribus, ut adversus libellum cuiusdam Helvidii responderem, facere distuli."

[23] Jerome stresses this point: See *ibid*. (*PL* 23.194): "Qui nunquam didicit loqui." Gennadius (*De viris* inl. 33) describes the treatise of Helvidius as "neque sermone neque ratione nitidum." H. Hagendahl calls attention to some Hieronymian invectives and their source; see *Latin Fathers and the Classics* (Göteborg, 1958), pp. 111-112.

[24] *Adv. Helvid*. 1 (*PL* 23.193).

[25] *De viris inl*. 135 (Richardson, p. 55). See *Ep*. 22.22 (*CSEL* 54.174): "In eo libro, quem adversus Helvidium de beatae Mariae perpetua virginitate edidimus." Jerome informs us he composed the work during the pontificate of Pope Damasus; *Ep*. 49.18 (*CSEL* 54.382): "Dum adviveret sanctae memoriae Damasus librum contra Helvidium de beatae Mariae virginitate perpetua scripsimus."

This dogmatico-polemical work, which very likely received the approval of Pope Damasus himself[28] and influenced the great Bishop of Milan,[29] confirmed Jerome as the first great champion of asceticism in Rome and the Western

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[26] We learn from St. Augustine that his followers were known as Helvidians. See *De haeresibus* 84 (*PL* 42.46): "Helvidiani exorti ab Helvidio, ita virginitati Mariae contradicunt, ut eam post Christum alios etiam filios de viro suo Joseph peperisse contendant."

[27] *Adv. Helvid*. 17 (*PL* 23.211-212): "Nunquid non possum tibi totam veterum scriptorum seriem commovere: Ignatium, Polycarpum, Irenaeum, Justinum martyrem multosque alios apostolicos et eloquentes viros, qui adversus Ebionem et Theodotum Byzantium, Valentinum, haec eadem sentientes, plena sapientiae volumina conscripserunt?"

[28] In his letter to Pammachius, Jerome recalls that when his treatise against Helvidius was published, Pope Damasus had no criticism to offer. See *Ep*. 49.18 (*CSEL* 54.382): "Num vir egregius et eruditus in scripturis et virgo ecclesiae virginis doctor aliquid in illud sermone reprehendit?" Moreover, in this passage A. Casamassa definitely sees the Pope's approval of Jerome's work. See "L'*Adversus Helvidium* di S. Girolamo," *Scritti Patristici* 1 (1955), pp. 85-86: "Girolamo stesso . . . ci fa conoscere che l'opera sua contro Elvidio meritò l'approvazione del pontefice Damaso."

[29] See Casamassa, *op. cit.*, p. 86. The author points out that St. Ambrose made use of the treatise in three of his writings: *Comment. in Lucam*, *De institutione virginis*, and *De Noe et Arca*. See also M. Viller, "L'*Adversus Helvidium* de saint Jérôme et la date du *De Noë et Arca* de saint Ambroise," *Recherches de science religieuse* 11 (1920), 95-101.

Church.[30]

2. Adversus Iovinianum

Ten years later[31] Jerome was engaged in another controversy affecting the ascetic cause. A Roman ascetic, by name Jovinianus,[32] published a number of commentaries (Commentariolos)[33] in which he presented his novel doctrines[34] that tended to undermine the foundations of Christian morality. These doctrines had already been propagated by him in Rome.[35] Some ascetics of that city sent a copy of Jovinian's treatises to Bethlehem requesting

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[30] See Cavallera, op. cit., 1.100: "Jérôme . . . apparaitra de plus en plus comme le champion redoutable de la sainteté chrétienne, particulièrement de l'ascétisme sacerdotal et monastique."

[31] See Cavallera, op. cit., 1.157.

[32] Adv. Iovin. 1.40 (PL 23.280): "Nam cum monachum esse se iactitet;" ibid.: "Et tamen iste formosus monachus." See Augustine, De haeresibus 82 (PL 42.46): "A Ioviniano quodam monacho ista haeresis orta est aetate nostra."

[33] This term is used by Jerome; see note 36 below.

[34] Augustine styles Jovinian's doctrine "a modern heresy" (novellam haeresim): De nuptiis et concupiscentia 2.38 (CSEL 42.292).

[35] This circumstance greatly irritated Jerome, for he considered himself a Christian of Rome, where he had been baptized by the Pope. See Ep. 15.3 (CSEL 54.64): "A me, homine Romano." Toward the end of his treatise he exclaims: "Was there no other province in the whole world to receive the gospel of pleasure . . . except the one which was founded by the teaching of Peter upon the rock of Christ?" Adv. Iovin. 2.37 (PL 23.350).

Jerome to reply to the absurdities contained in them.[36] From these writings Jerome extracted four basic theses (propositiones), which he proceeded to refute chiefly by scriptural proofs.[37]

First of all, in his first proposition Jovinian proclaimed the equality of merit acquired by virgins, widows, and married women after baptism, if their "works" were, in other respects, equal. In the second proposition he claimed that one who had received baptism "with full faith" could not be overcome by the devil.[38] The third proposition aimed at establishing that there is no difference between abstaining from food and eating it with thanksgiving. In his fourth proposition Jovinian affirmed the identity of reward in heaven for all those who have kept their baptismal innocence.[39]

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[36] Adv. Iov. 1.1 (PL 23.221): "Sancti ex urbe Roma fratres cuiusdam mihi Ioviniani Commentariolos transmiserunt rogantes, ut eorum ineptiis responderem."

[37] Ibid., 4 (PL 23.225).

[38] Ibid., 3 (PL 23.224): "Dicit [Iovinianus], virgines, viduas et maritatas, quae semel in Christo lotae sunt, si non discrepent ceteris operibus, eiusdem esse meriti. Nititur approbare eos, qui plena fide in baptismate renati sunt, a diabolo non posse subverti." When Jerome repeats the second proposition, he words the reference to the devil differently. Ibid., 2.1 (PL 23.295): "Secunda propositio est, eos qui fuerint baptizati a diabolo non posse tentari."

[39] Ibid., 1.3 (PL 23.224): "Tertium proponit inter abstinentiam ciborum et cum gratiarum actione perceptionem eorum nullam esse distantiam. Quartum, quod et extremum, esse omnium qui suum baptisma servaverint unam in regno caelorum remunerationem." These four propositions are summed up again in Adv. Iov. 2.35 (PL 23.347-348).

In his letter to Pope Siricius St. Ambrose accuses Jovinian of still another erroneos proposition--the denial of the perpetual virginity of Mary.[40] St. Augustine also makes reference to this Jovinian doctrine and its refutation by the bishop of Milan.[41] Jovinian's only argument against Mary's virginity *in partu* seems to be that a woman who gives birth to a child must suffer the loss of her virginity.[42] Since Jerome makes no mention of this additional proposition, Haller believes that Jovinian first began to propagate his doctrine concerning Mary in Milan,[43] where he took up residence after his condemnation and expulsion from Rome.[44] Valli, however, holds the view that Jerome does refute the proposition, but in a general way only when he points out that the Holy Spirit had chosen a virgin to become the mother of Christ.[45]

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[40] See Ambrose, *Ep*. 42.4 (*PL* 16.1173): "Christum ex virgine non potuisse generari"; "Virgo concepit, sed non virgo generavit."

[41] *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* 2.15 (*CSEL* 42.267): "Contra cuius [Ioviniani] inpietatem vir ille sanctus [Ambrosius] etiam post partum permanentem virginitatem Sanctae Mariae defendebat."

[42] See F. Valli, "Un eretico del secolo IV. Gioviniano," *Didaskaleion*, 2 (1924), 63-64: "Quindi egli [Gioviniano] volendo trovare qualche motivo logico per negare la verginità di Maria, aveva detto che una donna non può partorire senza perdere la verginità, che Maria quindi concepì come vergine, e nel modo di tutte le altre donne portorì."

[43] W. Haller, *Iovinianus, die Fragmente seiner Schriften, die Quellen zu seiner Geschichte, sein Leben und seine Lehre*, *TU* 17.2 (Leipzig, 1899), p. 127.

[44] *Ep. Siricii Papae* (*PL* 16.1169-1171). Jerome makes reference to the Roman condemnation in his *Adv. Vigil*. 1 (*PL* 23.355): "Hic [Iovinianus] Romanae Ecclesiae auctoritate damnatus."

Jovinian's false doctrines won for him many adherents. In fact Jerome speaks of an army of followers,[46] and Augustine relates that in Rome some holy virgins of advanced age violated their ascetic vows by contracting marriage.[47] Jerome at once rushed to the attack "to strike a blow for virginity"[48] and to crush "the Epicurus of the Christians" (*Epicurum Christianorum*), as he called the heretic.[49] He did so in two books *Adversus Iovinianum*[50]--one of his most brilliant and scholarly works.[51] The first book is wholly devoted to the refutation of his first of the four propositions;[52] the second book deals with the remaining three.

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[45] Valli, *op. cit.*, p. 66: "Ma vorremmo osservare all'Haller . . . che le parole di Girolamo sono generiche e riguardono la scelta di una vergine da parte dello Spirito Santo."

[46] *Adv. Iov.* 2.36 (*PL* 23.349): "Ne glorieris, quod multos discipulos habeas"; *ibid.*, 37 (*PL* 23.351-352): "Habes praeterea in exercitu plures succenturiatos."

[47] *De haeresibus* 82 (*PL* 42.46). The heresy gained no adherents among the clergy. See Augustine, *ibid.*: "Cito tamen ista haeresis oppressa et exstincta est, nec usque ad deceptionem aliquorum sacerdotum potuit pervenire."

[48] *Adv. Iov.* 1.3 (*PL* 23.224): "Nec indulgebo mucroni, iam nunc pro virginitate ferire cupienti."

[49] *Ibid.*, 1 (*PL* 23.221); *ibid.*, 2.36 (*PL* 23.349).

[50] See *In Ionam*, Prologus (Antin, p. 50): "Scripsi enim . . . et adversum Iovinianum duo volumina"; *Ep.* 54.18 (*CSEL* 54.485): "Scio me ante hoc ferme biennium edidisse libros contra Iovinianum."

[51] Cavallera, *op. cit.*, 1.157: "L'oeuvre la plus brillante et l'une des plus soignées de saint Jérôme."

Jerome's treatise against Jovinian was causing uneasiness and even scandal (*scandalum*) in Roman ascetic circles, for it seemed to exalt virginity by virtually condemning marriage.[53] Pammachius, a wealthy Roman senator and son-in-law of Paula,[54] went so far as to attempt to withdraw from circulation as many copies as possible of Jerome's work.[55] He was only partially successful;[56] therefore, he entreated Jerome to make it clear that he had not really depreciated the state of matrimony. In his letter to Pammachius Jerome gives a lengthy apologia (*apologeticum*) of his work against Jovinian.[57] When Jerome's enemies at Rome assailed his teaching on marriage as tainted with Manicheism,[58] he retorted that, if he maintained that marriage was a gift of God, he was unjustly accused of condemning it.[59] In this letter he makes the distinction: "It is one thing not to condemn, another to extol.[60] I protest that I did not, and do not condemn marriage, but I do extol virginity."[61]

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[52] A full analysis of the first book is given by J. G. Nolan, *Jerome and Jovinian*, (*Cath. Univ. Studies in Sacred Theology*, 2nd series, No. 97, Washington, D.C., 1956), pp. 37-43.

[53] *Ep*. 50.3 (*CSEL* 54.391).

[54] See *Ep*. 66.2 (*CSEL* 54.649); *ibid*., 5-6 (*ibid*., 653-654).

[55] *Ep*. 48.2 (*CSEL* 54.347): "De opusculis meis contra Iovinianum quod et prudenter et amanter feceris exemplaria subtrahendo, optime novi."

[56] *Ibid*. Copies of Jerome's work were in circulation even in the East. See *ibid*., 2 (*CSEL* 54.347): "In hac quoque provincia iam libri fuerant divulgati."

[57] *Ep*. 49 (*CSEL* 54.350-387). See *In Ionam*, Prologus (Antin, p. 50); *Ep*. 48.2 (*CSEL* 54.348): "ἀπολογητικόν ipsius operis tibi προσεφώνησα."

3. Adversus Vigilantium

More than twelve years later,[62] Jerome aimed his polemical darts at another enemy of asceticism--Vigilantius, a priest of Calagurris in south-western Gaul,[63] at one time his welcome guest at Bethlehem.[64] In his short treatise Adversus Vigilantium[65] Jerome overwhelms his opponent with invective[66] and refutes the principal errors propagated by the new heretic in his writings.[67] Vigilantius assailed the veneration paid to the martyrs' relics;[68] he protested against the vigils kept at their tombs and basilicas;[69] he discouraged almsgiving in support of ascetics and monks living in the Holy Land.[70]

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[58] See Ep. 49.2 (CSEL 54.352): "Nonne, quaeso, statim in principio operis mei ista praefatus sum? 'Neque vero Marcionis et Manichaei dogma sectantes nuptiis detrahimus.'"

[59] Ibid., 5 (CSEL 54.347).

[60] Ibid., 9 (CSEL 54.363): "Aliud est non damnare, aliud praedicare; aliud est veniam concedere, aliud laudare virtutem."

[61] Ibid., 20 (CSEL 54.385): "Igitur hoc extrema voce protestor, me nec damnasse nuptias nec damnare . . . . Virginitatem autem in caelum fero."

[62] See Cavallera, op. cit., 2.163.

[63] Adv. Vigil., 1 (PL 23.355): "Sola Gallia monstra non habuit . . . . Exortus est subito Vigilantius, seu verius Dormitantius." Jerome refers to him as "that tavern keeper from Calagurris" (ibid.). Calagurris was not far from the Spanish border; see ibid., 6 (PL 23.360): "Et quia ad radices Pyrenaei habitas, vicinusque es Iberiae." Hence Gennadius, De viris inl., 36 (Richardson, p. 74): "Vigilantius presbyter, natione Gallus."

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[64] See Ep. 58.11 (CSEL 54.74). Jerome became embittered against Vigilantius, when the latter spread the rumor in the West that his host at Bethlehem showed a leaning toward some of Origen's views. In his letter to Vigilantius (Ep. 61.3-4, CSEL 54.578-582) he repudiated the charge. Later he will accuse Rufinus of having instigated Vigilantius against him; see Adv. Ruf. 3.19 (PL 23.492): "Ego in Vigilantio tibi respondi. . . . Scio a quo illius contra me rabies concitata sit."

[65] Jerome describes it as "a brief dictated brochure" (dictatiuncula), dashed off in one night at the request of two priests, Riparius and Desiderius, neighbors of Vigilantius. See Adv. Vigil., 3 (PL 23.356); ibid., 17 (PL 23.368).

[66] Since Vigilantius was an enemy of vigils, Jerome dubbed him Dormitantius. See note 63 above and Ep. 109.3 (CSEL 55.355): "Nam quod dicis eum vigilias execrari, facit et hoc contra vocabulum suum, ut velit dormire Vigilantius et non audiat salvatorem dicentem: Sic non potuistis una hora vigilare mecum?" Undoubtedly in this treatise Jerome belabors his antagonist with some of his most violent abuse. See Cavallera, op. cit., 1.307: [Jérôme] "lui répond avec une extreme vivacité et des personnalités excessives."

[67] Some of these writings were sent to Jerome by his friends of Gaul, the priests Riparius and Desiderius. See Adv. Vigil., 3 (PL 23.356). An objective evaluation of Vigilantius' doctrine is not possible, since his writings have not come down to us. See Cavallera, op. cit., 1.307.

[68] Adv. Vigil., 1 (PL 23.355): "Martyrum neget sepulcra veneranda."

[69] Ibid.: "Damnandas dicat esse vigilias." See ibid., 9 (PL 23.363).

Furthermore, Vigilantius found fault with the austerities of the ascetics, especially with the practice of distributing their possessions to the poor;[71] he objected against the withdrawal into the desert--a practice which he considered as an act of desertion rather than one of conquest.[72] He also rejected the principle of ascetical chastity.[73] These were some of the principal revolutionary ideas[74] advocated against Christian asceticism by "the monster of Gaul"[75] Jerome proclaimed that "the evil spirit of Jovinian had risen again in the person of Vigilantius."[76]

In defense of the veneration of the martyrs' relics,

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[70] Adv. Vigil., 13 (PL 23.365): "Praeterea iisdem ad me relatum est epistolis, quod . . . tu prohibeas Hierosolymam in usum sanctorum aliqua sumptuum solatia dirigi."

[71] Ibid., 14 (ibid., 366): "Quod autem asserit eos melius facere, qui utuntur rebus suis, et paulatim fructus possessionum suarum pauperibus dividunt, quam illos qui possessionibus venundatis, semel omnia largiuntur."

[72] Ibid., 16 (ibid., 367): "Respondebis: 'Hoc non est pugnare, sed fugere. Sta in acie, adversariis armatus obsiste.'"

[73] Ibid., 1 (ibid., 355): "Exortus est subito Vigilantius . . . qui . . . dicat . . . continentiam haeresim."

[74] See Schanz, op. cit., 4.479.

[75] See Adv. Vigil., 1 (PL 23.355): "Sola Gallia monstra non habuit . . . . Exortus est subito Vigilantius."

[76] Ibid.: "In isto Ioviniani mens prava surrexit."

Jerome asserted: "No, we do not adore the relics of the martyrs . . . . We honor them, in order to adore Him whose witnesses (martyres) they were."[77]

As to the practice of renunciation of goods, every ascetic "who wishes to be perfect,"[78] accepts the invitation of Christ Himself: "If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow me."[79]

The withdrawal to the desert Jerome defended as a practice dictated by spiritual strategy. To the objection: "'Why,' you will say, 'go to the desert?'"[80] he gives the reply: "I confess my weakness. . . . If I flee, I avoid the sword [of the foe] . . . . I do not overcome [the foe], but I flee to make sure that I may not be overcome."[81]

Both Grützmacher and Cavallera believe that Jerome's diatribe carried so much weight that the subversive ideas of

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[77] Ep. 109.1 (CSEL 55.352): "Nos autem non dico martyrum reliquias . . . colimus et adoramus . . . . Honoramus autem reliquias martyrum, ut eum, cuius sunt martyres, adoremus."

[78] Adv. Vigil., 14 (PL 23.366): "Qui vult esse perfectus."

[79] Ibid.: "Non a me ei, sed a Domino respondebitur: 'Si vis esse perfectus, vade, vende omnia quae habes, et da pauperibus: et veni sequere me.'"

[80] Ibid., 16 (PL 23.367): "Cur, inquies, pergis ad eremum?"

[81] Ibid.: "Fateor imbecillitatem meam. . . Si fugero, gladium devitavi. . . . Ego cum fugero, non vinco in eo quod fugio: sed ideo fugio, ne vincar."

Vigilantius were effectively crushed in Gaul.[82] In fact we learn from Gennadius that he withdrew to Barcelona across the Spanish border.[83]

4. Adversus Pelagianos

Leaving his native British Isles,[84] Pelagius came to Rome, where he received a good scholarly education.[85] St. Augustine speaks of him as having resided in Rome a long time.[86] During this period Pelagius lived as an ascetic, sought the society of persons of deep piety, and began to gain adherents, chief among them Caelestius and Julian, later the bishop of Eclanum in Campania. These three men embody Pelagianism; they were its founders and apostles. They also imparted to it its doctrinal consistency.

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[82] Cavallera, op. cit., 1.307: "Le traité de Jérôme. . . fut pour Vigilance comme un coup de massue sous lequel il resta accablé."

[83] Gennadius, De viris inl., 36 (Richardson, p. 74): "Vigilantius presbyter . . . Hispaniae Barcelonensis parochiae ecclesiam tenuit."

[84] His British origin is one certain fact about Pelagius' life. See G. de Plinval, Pélage, sa vie, ses écrits et sa réforme (Lausanne, 1943), pp. 57-58: "Nous ne savons de source certaine qu'une chose: Pélage est breton"; J. Ferguson, Pelagius, A Historical and Theological Study (Cambridge, 1956), p. 39. St. Augustine says that he was known as Bretto to distinguish him from Pelagius of Terentum. See Ep. 186.1 (CSEL 57.45): "Pelagium, quem credimus, ut ab alio distingueretur, qui Pelagius Terenti dicitur, Brittonem cognominatum. . . ." To Orosius he is "Brittanicus noster" (Liber Apologeticus 12; CSEL 5.620).

[85] See Plinval, op. cit., p. 65. The writer also maintains that Pelagius pursued juridical studies at Rome: ibid.: "Mais c'est à l'étude du droit qu'il dut l'achèvement le plus substantiel de sa culture genéral."

In his *Commentary on Jeremias*, which he was composing in 415,[88] Jerome makes a reference to "his old friendship" with Pelagius.[89] This statement presupposes that they probably met in Rome during Jerome's sojourn there between

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[86] Cf. *Ep*. 177.2 (*CSEL* 44.670): "Audivimus enim esse in urbe Roma, ubi ille [Pelagius] diu vixit, nonnullos, qui diversis causis ei faveant . . ."; *De gratia Christi* 2.24 (*CSEL* 42.183): "Alia quoque ipsius [Pelagii] in urbe Roma, ubi diutissime vitam duxerat." According to Plinval, Pelagius must have spent about 30 years in Rome. See *op*. *cit*., p. 64, note 5: "Il aurait fait un séjour d'une trentaine d'années."

[87] Cf. J. Tixeront, *Histoire des dogmes dans l'antiquité chrétienne* (Paris, 1912), 2.437: "Ces trois hommes, Pélage, Celestius, Julien, personnifient le pélagianisme. Ils l'ont fondé, propagé, organisé en une doctrine suivie."

[88] Cavallera, *op*. *cit*., 2.414.

[89] See *Comment*. *in Hier*. *IV*, Prologus (*CC* 74.175): "Quodsi cavendum nobis est, ne veterem laedere videamur necessitudinem. . . ." Also Plinval, *op*. *cit*., p. 64, note 5: "Nous admettons: . . . que c'est à Rome, donc entre 382-385, que Pélage est entré en relations avec s. Jérôme, ce qui explique l'expression: *veterem necessitudinem*, employée par ce dernier en 414."

382 and 385.[90] When Alaric was at the gates of Rome, Pelagius and Caelestius departed for North Africa. Soon Pelagius sailed for Palestine, leaving Caelestius behind.[91] In Jerusalem his influence spread by personal contact and by writing. When Jerome gives us an idea of what Pelagius looked like, he dips his pen in vituperation. He speaks of him as broad-shouldered as a wrestler[92] and compares him to "a hound from the Alps, big and fleshy."[93] Furthermore, he suggests that Pelagius "is a hulking brute, weighted down with Scottish porridge."[94]

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[90] Cavallera, *op*. *cit*., 2.155.

[91] See Fliche-Martin, *Histoire de l'Eglise* 4.94: "Après avoir quitté Rome devant l'invasion d'Alaric et s'être arreté quelque temps en Afrique. . . il est venu se fixer . . . à Jérusalem"; G. de Plinval, "Pelagio e Pelagianesimo," *EC* (Roma, 1952), 9.1071: "Nel 410, quando Alarico invase l'Italia, Pelagio se ne allontanò; dopo un breve soggiorno in Africa, si stabilì a Gerusalemme."

[92] See *Ep*. 50.4 (*CSEL* 54.392): "Habet latera et athletarum robur et belle corpulentus est." See also Orosius, *Apol*. 31.2 (*CSEL* 5.657): "Latos humeros gestas robustamque cervicem, praeferens etiam in fronte pinguedinem."

[93] *Comment*. *in Hier*. *III*, Prologus (*CC* 74.119-120): "Ipseque [diabolus] mutus latrat per Alpinum canem, grandem et corpulentum." This is the interpretation of S. Reiter; see *Comment*. *in Hier*. *III*, Prologus (*CC* 74.120, note): "*Alpinum canem*] scil. Pelagium."

[94] *Comment*. *in Hier*., Prologus (*CC* 74.2): "Stolidissimus et Scottorum pultibus praegravatus." Quite different is the picture left us by St. Augustine. The Saint knows from hearsay that Pelagius is a man of holiness and a Christian of advanced virtue. See *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* 3.1; *CSEL* 60.129: "Legi Pelagii quaedam scripta, sancti viri, ut audio, et non parvo provectu Christiani." He testifies to the fact that he enjoyed a good reputation (*ibid*., 2.58; *CSEL* 36.171: "Pelagi ipsius nomen non sine aliqua laude posui, quia vita eius a multis praedicabatur"),

In the summer of 415,[95] the young Spanish priest, Paulus Orosius,[96] one of Pelagius' most bitter opponents, left Africa and sailed for Palestine to visit Jerome. With him he was carrying two letters or treatises from Augustine, at whose recommendation he undertook the journey to the East.[97] In the first letter[98] the bishop of Hippo introduces Orosius[99] and raises the problem of the origin of the human soul;[100] in the other, he comments on a passage in St. James' Epistle.[101] At the close Augustine pays a warm tribute to the scholarly monk of Bethlehem: "I should pity the man who did not feel the greatest veneration for your mass of achievements, your profound and holy works, and who did not thank God, Whose goodness has made you what you are."[102]

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[95] See Cavallera, op. cit., 2.164.

[96] See Gennadius, De viris inl., 40 (Richardson, p. 76): "Orosius presbyter Hispani generis," Perhaps he was a native of Tarragona; see Orosius, Hist. VII.22.8 (CSEL 5.483): "Tarraconem nostram."

[97] See Gennadius, op. cit., p. 40: "Hic est Orosius, qui ab Augustino pro discenda animae ratione ad Hieronymum missus."

[98] Ep. 166 (CSEL 44.545-585); cf. Jerome, Ep. 131 (CSEL 56.202-225).

[99] Ep. 166.2 (CSEL 44.547-548).

[100] See note 97 above.

[101] Ep. 167 (CSEL 44.586-609); Jerome, Ep. 132 (CSEL 56.225-241).

[102] Ep. 167.21 (CSEL 44.609): "Infelix est enim, qui non tantos et tam sanctos tuorum studiorum labores et digne honorat et de his domino deo nostro, cuius munere talis es, gratias agit."

Orosius received a friendly welcome as one whom Augustine had commended most warmly.[103] His main purpose was to remain at the monastery to study under Jerome for some time. Soon after his arrival, however, Orosius became Jerome's strong ally in the controversy with Pelagius and that very year wrote his *Liber Apologeticus*,[104] with the intention of unmasking the error of the new heresy.

In the spring of 416,[105] Orosius returned to Africa, bringing with him a letter from Jerome to Augustine. It was not a reply to the questions that had been raised by the bishop of Hippo, but only a brief note.[106] Jerome paid a modest tribute to Augustine's genius and enclosed the special greetings of Eustochium and her young niece Paula.[107]

Even before the coming of Orosius, Jerome had penned a letter of some length to Ctesiphon, in which he took a stand officially against Pelagianism.[108] In this letter he concentrates upon the broader issues of free will and sinlessness.[109] In the teachings of Pelagius he detects the offshoots from the Origenistic tree,[110] and points out that they emanate partly from the Manicheans and the Gnostics and partly from the doctrines of Evagrius of Pontus, Rufinus, his disciple, and Jovinian.[111] He concludes with a promise that, given greater leisure, he will compose a full refutation, in order radically to destroy the Pelagian errors.[112]

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[103] See *Ep*. 134.1 (*CSEL* 56.261).

[104] See *CSEL* 5.601-664.

[105] Cavallera, *op*. *cit*., 2.164.

[106] *Ep*. 134 (*CSEL* 56.261-263). See Cavallera, *op*. *cit*., 1.50.

[107] *Ep*. 134.1-2 (*CSEL* 56.262). See *ibid*., 2.

[108] *Ep*. 133 (*CSEL* 56.251-260). In the *Liber Apologeticus* 4 (*CSEL* 5.608) Orosius relates that he reminded the Fathers of the Synod held in Jerusalem that Jerome had condemned the Pelagian system in his letter to Ctesiphon.

Urged by his friends,[113] Jerome soon carried out his promise by editing the Adversus Pelagianos in three books, his most extensive polemical work. The treatise, preceded by a prologue,[114] is cast in the form of a dialogue between two imaginary characters: Atticus, a Catholic, who voices the views of Jerome, and Critobolus, the Pelagian, who presents the views of the opponents.[115] However, it was not Jerome's intention to subject to criticism the entire Pelagian doctrine.[116] He first treats the question concerning the possibility of a sinless life. Perfection, of which the Scripture speaks, is to be attributed to God's mercy; it is to be understood as relative, not absolute, perfection.[117] Then he discusses the possibility to observe the commandments of God. Their fulfillment is within the power of human nature, but the individual cannot observe all the commandments separately, except with the aid of divine grace.[118] Jerome now takes a stand on a series of theses, which Pelagius had drawn up in his Liber Eclogarum.[119] In the final thesis, he once more takes up the two propositions discussed at the beginning of his work, namely: (1) "Man, if he wills, can be sinless"; (2) "If he wills he can easily observe the divine commandments."[120] For this purpose he exhaustively proves from Sacred Scripture how sins and even faults due to error and ignorance were punished by God.[121] The third book of the dialogue can be considered as an independent section, even though it is not limited to one unified topic.[122]

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[109] See Ferguson, op. cit., p. 79.

[110] Ep. 133.3 (CSEL 56.247): "Vis adhuc et alium nosse erroris tui principem? Doctrina tua Originis ramusculus est."

[111] See ibid., 3.3 (ibid.).

[112] Ibid., 13 (CSEL 56.259): "Quamquam in promisso opere plenius--si dominus gratiam dederit--dicturus sum"; ibid., 13 (ibid., 260): "Neque enim a me librum . . . flagitasti, qui dictandus ex otio est, et omnes oppositiones eorum Christi auxilio destruendae."

[113] Adv. Pelag., Prologus (PL 23.517).

[114] Prologus (PL 23.517-520).

[115] See ibid. (ibid., 520): "Attici et Critobuli nomina posui, per quos et nostra pars et adversariorum quid sentiret, expromerem."

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[116] Ibid. (ibid., 519): "Hic liber quem nunc cudere nitimur, Socraticorum consuetudinem servabit, ut . . . magis perspicua veritas fiat."

[117] Adv. Pelag., 1.1-20 (PL 23.519-537).

[118] Ibid., 1.21-24 (ibid., 537-541).

[119] See ibid., 1.25-31 (ibid., 541-549).

[120] Ibid., 1.32 (ibid., 549-550): "Posse hominem sine peccato esse, et Dei mandata facile custodire, si velit."

At the close Jerome touches upon the question of infant baptism.[123] In baptism the child is released from the chain of sin which bound his ancient forefather Adam.[124] In confirmation he quotes the doctrine of "the teacher of the Gentiles" and of St. Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage.[125] The dialogue ends with a glowing tribute to St. Augustine, "that holy man and eloquent bishop," four of whose anti-Pelagian writings are enumerated.[126] Jerome expresses his joy that a brilliant intellect (*clarissimum ingenium*) has arisen who will continue the struggle against a doctrine replete with perversity.[127]

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[121] *Ibid*., 1.33-2.30 (*ibid*., 550-596). See *ibid*., 1.32 (*ibid*., 550): "Nunc mihi latissima Scripturarum spatia peragranda sunt, ut doceam errorem et ignorantiam esse peccatum."

[122] *Ibid*., 3.1-19 (*ibid*., 595-618).

[123] *Ibid*., 3.17-18 (*ibid*., 614-616).

[124] *Ibid*., 18 (*ibid*., 616): "Caeterum omnes homines, aut antiqui propagatoris Adam, aut suo nomine tenentur obnoxii. Qui parvulus est, parentis in baptismo vinculo solvitur."

[125] *Ibid*. "Respondebit tibi evangelica tuba: Doctor gentium . . ."; *ibid*.: "Beatus martyr Cyprianus . . . in epistola quam scribit ad episcopum Fidum de infantibus baptizandis haec memorat . . . ."

[126] *Ibid*., 19 (*ibid*., 616-617).

[127] See *ibid*., 19 (*ibid*., 617-618).

Three years later the Council of Carthage formally condemned Pelagianism,[128] while in the East the synod of Antioch pronounced Pelagius excluded from the holy places of Jerusalem.[129] Jerome flashed the news to Riparius: "Know that in this part of the world, without any human aid, but simply by the decree of Christ, Catiline [i.e., Pelagius] has been driven not only from the city, but from the entire territory of Palestine."[130] The monk of Bethlehem fully realized that it was through the efforts of Augustine that Pelagius had been defeated; in one of his last letters to the Bishop of Hippo, he sounds a paean of praise and victory: "I cannot pass an hour without extolling your name for the ardor with which you have kept the standard of the faith flying in the teeth of contrary winds . . . . Bravo! The whole world extols you. Catholics venerate and admire you as the restorer of their ancient faith."[131]

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[128] See G. de Plinval, "Les luttes Pélagiennes," Fliche-Martin, *Histoire d'Eglise*, 4.109: "Un concile général de 214 éveques, concile plénier de toute l'Afrique groupant l'épiscopat de la Proconsulaire et celui de la Numidie, après avoir expressément maintenu la condemnation portée par Innocent contra Célestius et Pélage, promulgue en neuf articles les théories essentielles de la grâce."

[129] See Cavallera, *op*. *cit*., 2.165.

[130] *Ep*. 138 (*CSEL* 56.265-266): "Tamen scias in hanc provinciam nullis humanis auxiliis sed proprie Christi sententia pulsum esse non solum de urbe, sed de Palaestinae quoque finibus Catilinam [Pelagium]." See too Cavallera, *op*. *cit*., 2.330, note 2: "Jérôme fait allusion à l'expulsion de Pélage . . . . Catilina est Pélage."

[131] *Ep*. 141 (*CSEL* 56.290): ". . . ut absque tui nominis mentione ne unam quidem horam praeterire patiamur, qui contra flantes ventos ardore fidei perstitisti . . . Macte virtute, in orbe celebraris. Catholici te conditorem antiquae rursum fidei venerantur atque suscipiunt."

C. HOMILIAE

Since Jerome was head of a monastic community, we are not surprised to learn that he quite often preached at Bethlehem. This fact he himself made known, when he told Rufinus that daily he explained the Septuagint Bible to his fellow monks.[1] Furthermore, nine years previously he had already recorded in his *De viris illustribus* seven homilies on the Psalms.[2] Most likely these sermons were taken down by some monks skilled in shorthand,[3] and then recopied; with time they reached Jerome's friends in the West. In fact, already in 413 Augustine quoted most accurately from Jerome's homily on Psalm 93.[4] However, for many centuries--even up to the end of the 19th century--a widespread belief prevailed that no authentic sermons of Jerome had come down to us.[5] It was due to the painstaking researches of the eminent Benedictine of Maredsous, Dom Morin, that we now possess about a hundred short Hieronymian sermons. Most of these Morin edited in the years 1897-1903, dividing them into three categories: the first and largest category comprises sermons on the Psalms, the second, ten sermons on the Marcan Gospel, and the third, ten sermons on various topics.[6] A thorough examination of the entire corpus of these sermons confirmed Morin's conclusion of their Hieronymian authorship.

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[1] *Adv. Rufinum* 2.24 (*PL* 23.468): "Quos [Septuaginta interpretes] quotidie in conventu fratrum edissero."

[2] *De viris inl*. 135 (Richardson, p. 56): "*In Psalmos* a decimo usque ad sextum decimum tractatus septem."

[3] See A. Penna, *S. Gerolamo* (Turin, 1949), p. 126: "Essi [i discorsi] si presentano nella forma viva, spigliata, nella quale furono pronunziati e qualche monaco intelligente stenografò." See also Cavallera, *op. cit.*, 1.185, note 2. According to A. S. Pease ("Notes on St. Jerome's Tractates," *Jour. of Bibl. Lit.* 26 [1908], 122), "We have not his [Jerome's] notes but the report (shorthand or otherwise) of a hearer, who wrote down, to the best of his ability, all that Jerome said, important or unimportant."

[4] Augustine, *Ep*. 148.13-14 (*CSEL* 44.343-344) and Jerome, *Tract. de Ps*. 93 (*CC* 78.144-145). See Morin's "Praefatio" in *CC* 78, p. VIII.

Some of his sermons Jerome preached in the Anastasis at Jerusalem, where John, the bishop of that city, presided over the functions of the more solemn feasts. In her Itinerarium, Egeria remarks that on those occasions each priest was given the opportunity of addressing the congregation.[7] In Jerome's sermons we note occasional references to the priest (*sanctus presbyter*) who preceeded him.[8] One Christmas Day, when Jerome spoke last, he introduced the presiding bishop who was to speak next: "We will now lend our ears to the pontiff (*pontifici*). Let us hear attentively from his mouth the things which were lacking in our own sermon."[9]

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[5] G. Morin, "Les monuments de la prédication de S. Jérôme," Etudes, Textes, Découvertes I (Anecdota Maredsolana, 2e série, Maredsous, 1913), p. 220.

[6] Morin, S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Tractatus sive Homiliae in Psalmos, in Marci Evangelium aliaque varia argumenta (Anecdota Maredsolana 3.2-3, Maredsous, 1897-1903). The text was reprinted, with some emendations in the critical apparatus, by the editors of the Corpus Christianorum. See CC 78, "Praefatio," pp. XXI-XXII. According to Pease (op. cit., pp. 129-131), the commentary on Psalms 10 and 15, edited by Morin (Anecdota Maredsolana 3.3.1-3), is what remains to us of the seven treatises on the Psalms cited by Jerome in the catalogue of his own works (See note 2 above). However, see A. Vaccari, "Frammento di un perduto Tractatus di S. Girolamo," Biblica 1 (1920), 513-517; idem, "A Biblica 1 (1920), 514. Correzioni ed Aggiunte," Biblica 2 (1921), 77.

Most of his sermons, however, Jerome preached to his small community at Bethlehem. From the simplicity of his language[10] and of his scriptural explanations, it is clear that he is not addressing a learned audience, but one composed in large measure of monks to whom he refers as "the less cultured brethren" (*simpliciores fratres*).[11]

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[7] *Itinerarium Egeriae* 25 (*CC* 175.70): "Sane quia hic consuetudo sic est, ut de omnibus presbyteris, qui sedent, quanti volunt, predicent, et post illos omnes episcopus predicat."

[8] See, e.g., two references to the *sanctus presbyter* in the *Tract*. *de Ps*. 96 (*CC* 78.157).

[9] *Homilia de Nativitate Domini* (*CC* 78.529). Whether this *pontifex* was the bishop of Jerusalem, or some other bishop, Morin (See *CC* 78.529, note) hesitates to assert. He points out, however, that on the eve of Christmas the bishop of Jerusalem, accompanied by clergy and people, was accustomed to go to Bethlehem, where, together with the monks of the place, he celebrated the solemn functions on Christmas night.

[10] For an excellent treatment of the style of Jerome's homilies, see Pease, *op*. *cit*., pp. 112-123.

[11] *Tract*. *de Ps*. 91 (*CC* 78.139): "Loquor simplicius propter simpliciores fratres, qui non possunt intellegere sublimius." Also *Tract*. *de Ps*. 76 (*CC* 78.59); *ibid*. (*CC* 78.60); *Tract*. *de Ps*. 90 (*CC* 78.129); *Tract*. *de Ps*. 114 (*CC* 78.236); *Tract*. *de Ps*. 119 (*CC* 78.253). Cf. P. Antin, "*Simple et Simplicité* chez saint Jérôme," *RB* 71 (1961), 371-381.

Commenting on the opening of the Gospel of John, he holds up John the Baptist as an ideal model for his monks.

> Consider, my dear monks, your lofty position. John was the first of our calling. He was a monk too. From his birth, he lived in the desert and was fed in the desert. He waited for Christ in the wilderness. Note the difference. At the time when John was born, and when he retired into the desert, the Temple, which as you know was destroyed, was overflowing with wealth. There was gold, there was silver, there was everything in plenty. . . . Now Christ, the Son of God, was not recognized in the Temple, but He was preached in the desert. The humble figure loved the humble folk. What is the reason for stressing all this? In order that we may learn that the first of our calling was John the Baptist. Blessed are those who imitate John![12]

Continually Jerome warns his monks against false doctrines and heretical sects, singling out especially the Arians and the Manicheans.[13] They must counter all promoters of heresy with the Psalmist: "O Lord, deliver me from lying lip, from treacherous tongue."[14]

There were occasions when Jerome spoke openly of his monks' faults against fraternal charity. "We have left our property," he complains, "we have left our country, we have left the world, and in the monastery we quarrel over a reed pen!"[15] Jerome tells them that they have no right to say: "We are in the monastery, and so we do not commit serious offenses."[16] He warns them against the devilish sins of the tongue. "The tongue knows no middle way: either it is a great evil or a great good. . . . It is no slight fault to malign a brother, to be unable to keep silence, to go from cell to cell slandering others." He offers them practical advice: "A brother has fallen into sin; either you rejoice or you are sorry. If you are glad, does one rejoice in the misfortune of another? If you are sorry, why do you go about gossiping? Why do you tell others? Let God see your sorrow, and let the brother himself perceive it. Do not let other brethren hear about it."[17]

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[12] Homilia in Ioh. Evangelistam (CC 78.517).

[13] In the homilies on the 59 Psalms alone, there are 42 references to heretics and heresies. See Pease, op. cit., p. 114, note 22.

[14] Tract. de Ps. 119 (CC 78.251).

[15] Tract. de Ps. 119 (CC 78.259): "Dimisimus possessionem, dimisimus patriam, dimisimus saeculum: et propter calamum rixam facimus in monasterio."

How strongly Jerome urges his monks to avoid backbiting. "Great is the evil that the tongue can cause," he remarks, recalling the teaching of St. James. "Another's tongue does not injure me; my own is my enemy. . . . My tongue is a sword that slays my soul. I think that I am harming my enemy; I do not realize that I am killing myself."[18] He pictures the tongue guilty of backbiting as filled with deadly venom, which only the arrows and the fiery coals of the Lord can expel. "Would that this burning coal of desolation (carbo desolatorius) were given to us!" he exclaims. That too should be the prayer of his monks. "Would to heaven this solitude were granted to us! Would that all wickedness were cleared away from our tongue, so that where there are thorns . . . the fire of the Lord may come and burn everything and prepare a solitude for Christ."[19]

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[16] Tract. de Ps. 119 (CC 78.252): "Non ergo putent monachi se debere esse securos, et dicant, Interim grandia crimina non facimus in monasterio."

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid. (CC 78.260): "Nihil mihi nocet lingua alterius: mea lingua mihi inimica est. . . . Lingua mea gladius est, interficit animam meam. Puto quod inimicum meum noceam, et nescio quod meipsum occido." Also ibid. (CC 78.253).

How lovingly Jerome exhorts his fellow monks to adopt the spirit of peacemakers. "Peace is the might (arma) of the Christians. Blessed are the peacemakers; not only those who restore peace among the quarrelsome, but also those who establish peace in themselves . . . . Let us guard carefully the gift Christ has given us; let us preserve peace, and it will preserve us in Christ Jesus."[20]

How earnestly he urges his monks to practice the spirit of forgiveness, enjoined by Christ Himself. "Even if a brother sins against you seventy times seven times in a day and begs your pardon, forgive him." He feels it his duty to warn those monks who, because of some bitter word, store up "the poison of resentment" in their hearts for as many as ten or fifteen days.[21]

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[19] Tract. de Ps. 119 (CC 78.254-255).

[20] Ibid. (CC 78.260-261).

Very different from the harsh, aggressive and impetuous Jerome is the Jerome of these homilies. The abbot of Bethlehem is a father, who instructs, exhorts and admonishes with all patience and kindness. In Jerome's exhortations Wiesen erroneously perceives "satiric pictures of monastic behavior,"[22] whereas we find in them instances of Jerome's paternal solicitude for his brethren, which reveals a heart, exalted by grace and inspired by the meekness of Christ.

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[21] Tract. de Ps. 119 (CC 78.259-260); ibid. (CC 78.257).

[22] Wiesen, op. cit., p. 94.

D. VITAE

Jerome composed three Lives of hermits: *Vita Pauli Monachi*, *Vita Malchi*, and *Vita Hilarionis*,[1] which he enters in that order in the bibliography of his works.[2]

1. *Vita Pauli Monachi*

After making a pilgrimage to the Holy Places, Heliodorus stopped at Antioch, where Jerome was enjoying the hospitality of Evagrius, the bishop of that city. Jerome urged his friend to accompany him to the desert. But Heliodorus felt concern about his old parents and his widowed sister; he thought also of his nephew Nepotianus, who was still a child. In the end he decided to return to Italy. Jerome accompanied him as far as the gates of the city, and both parted in tears.[3]

Finally Jerome made up his mind to retire to the desert alone. Bidding farewell to Evagrius and taking his library with him,[4] the young scholar, full of enthusiasm, set off to begin his novitiate of ascetical life in the desert of Chalcis, some fifty miles southeast of Antioch.[5] The pupil of Donatus became a pupil of the desert. He dwelt in a cave; he wore a garment of the coarsest cloth; he fasted frequently; at night he slept on the bare ground.[6] Writing to Heliodorus, he penned a beautiful eulogy of the desert life.

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[1] *Vita Pauli Monachi* (*PL* 23.17-30); *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Vita Malchi Monachi Captivi*, ed. C. C. Mierow, in *Classical Essays Presented to James A. Kleist* (St. Louis, 1946), pp. 31-60; *Vita Hilarionis* (*PL* 23.29-54).

[2] *De viris inl*. 135 (Richardson, pp. 55-56).

[3] *Ep*. 14.1-3 (*CSEL* 54.44-47).

[4] *Ep*. 22.30 (*CSEL* 54.189): "Bybliotheca, quam mihi Romae summo studio ac labore confeceram, carere non potui."

> A desert, blooming with the flowers of Christ! O solitude, wherein are born those stones of which in the Apocalypse the city of the mighty king is built! O desert, rejoicing in God's familiar presence! . . . The light I look upon, believe me, is strangely brighter. Here it is my delight to shake off the burden of the flesh and to fly up to the pure radiance of the sky.[7]

Years later, when he recalled this letter of exhortation, Jerome accused himself of "having embellished some parts of it with the flowery language of the schools."[8] However, Monceaux observes: "In spite of the flowers of rhetoric, the letter of Heliodorus is the finest panegyric of the desert and the anchorite's life in the whole history of asceticism."[9]

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[5] See *Ep*. 5.1 (*CSEL* 54.21); *Ep*. 7.1 (*CSEL* 54.26); *Ep*. 15.2 (*CSEL* 54.64); *Vita Malchi* 3 (Mierow, p. 38); Cavallera, *op*. *cit*., 1.39.

[6] *Ep*. 14 and *Ep*. 22 *passim*.

[7] *Ep*. 14.10 (*CSEL* 54.59-60).

[8] *Ep*. 52.1 (*CSEL* 54.414): "Quaedam scolastico flore depinximus."

[9] P. Monceaux, *Saint Jérôme*, *sa jeunesse*, *l'étudiant*, *l'ermite* (Paris, 1932), p. 183.

To the eulogy of the desert life Jerome added another--the eulogy of Paul of Thebes,[10] "the founder," as he called him, of the anchorite life. In the same context, however, he asserts that the man who made the anchorite life illustrious was Anthony.[11] At the time of Jerome, Anthony was generally considered the initiator of the eremitic life.[12] Nevertheless, according to Jerome, in Egypt it was held that earlier still a certain Paul of Thebes spent a very long life in the desert,[13] that two of Anthony's own disciples bore witness to this fact,[14] and that Anthony himself had paid him homage.[15]

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[10] On Paul as an historical figure, see H. Delehaye, "La personnalité historique de S. Paul de Thèbes," Analecta Bollandiana 44 (1926), 64-69. F. Cavallera, "Paul de Thèbes et Paul d'Oxyrhynque," RAM 7 (1926), 302-305. H. Musurillo (Symbolism and the Christian Imagination [Baltimore, 1962], p. 53) holds the view that Jerome "invented Paul, the First Hermit." Antin is less positive; see Essai sur Saint Jérôme (Paris, 1951), p. 124: "Invention de Jérôme? Pas entièrement." Already in Jerome's time, some of his detractors expressed doubts as to the historical character of his hero. See Vita Hilarionis, Prologus (PL 23.30).

[11] Ep. 22.36 (CSEL 54.200): "Huius vitae auctor Paulus, inlustrator Antonius."

[12] Vita Pauli, Prologus (PL 23.17): "Alii autem in quam opinionem vulgus omne consentit, adserunt Antonium huius propositi caput."

[13] Ibid., 7 (PL 23.22).

[14] Ibid. (PL 23.17): "Amathas vero et Macarius, discipuli Antonii . . . etiam nunc affirmant Paulum quendam Thebaeum principem istius rei fuisse non nominis."

[15] Chronicon (Helm, p. 240): "Antonius Monachus . . . solitus multis ad se venientibus de Paulo quodam Thebaeo mirae beatitudinis viro referre."

The *Vita Pauli*, an original writing of Jerome,[16] is a charming, edifying tale, a romance of hermit life.[17] Cavallera observes that it formed a sort of complement of the *Vita Antonii*.[18] The latter was already enjoying a wide circulation both in the East and in the West, for the work had been translated and adapted into Latin by Evagrius.[19]

The opportunity of dedicating the *Vita* presented itself to Jerome when news reached him that his friend Paul of Concordia was celebrating his hundreth birthday. For that occasion he wrote him a letter of enthusiastic congratulation,[20] and from among his "Oriental souvenirs" he selected a birthday gift--the *Vita Pauli*. This literary gift Jerome dedicated to the centenarian in these words: "I am sending to you, that is, to Paul the old, a still older Paul."[21]

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[16] See J. de Decker, "Contribution à l'étude des Vies de Paul de Thèbes," in *Recueil de travaux publiées par la faculté de philosophie et lettres* (Univ. de Gand, 1905), fasc. 31.

[17] See H. Hagendahl, *Latin Fathers and the Classics* (Göteborg, 1958), p. 105: "a romance of monastic life"; P. de Labriolle, *Histoire de la littérature latine chrétienne* (Paris, 1947), p. 507: "Il fit ainsi de véritables petits romans historique."

[18] Cavallera, *op. cit.*, 1.45.

[19] *De viris inl.* 125 (Richardson, p. 53).

[20] *Ep.* 10 (*CSEL* 54.35-38).

[21] *Ibid.*, 3 (*CSEL* 54.38): "Misimus . . . tibi, id est Paulo seni, Paulum seniorem."

In the prologue to the *Vita*, Jerome indicates quite clearly the purpose of his work. Since no mention had been made of Paul of Thebes, either in the Greek biography of Anthony or in its Evagrian version, Jerome wanted to fill the gap, as it were, and to shed new light upon the beginnings of the eremitic life in Egypt. He limited himself to an account of Paul's early life and last days, for, as he points out, no one knew anything about the hermit's middle life and his struggles with Satan in the Theban desert.[22] The first purpose of the *Vita*, therefore, may be said to be didactic. The second is an ascetic one. It has been pointed out how both in the letter to Heliodorus and in the *Vita Pauli* Jerome reveals his enthusiasm for monasticism. Hence we will not be far from the truth if to the first object of the *Vita* we add another--one that would loom most important in Jerome's mind--namely, that of attracting others toward asceticism, the very purpose aimed at by Athanasius in his life of Anthony.[23] Thus the *Vita Pauli*, like the *Vita Antonii*, must have helped many a Christian reader to embark upon a life of complete renunciation of the world.[24]

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[22] *Vita Pauli*, Prologus (*PL* 23.19).

[23] *Vita Antonii*, Prologus (*PG* 26.837): οἶδα δέ, ὅτι καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀκούσαντες... θελήσετε καὶ ζηλῶσαι τὴν ἐκείνου πρόθεσιν.

2. *Vita Malchi*

Some ten years after the appearance of the *Vita Pauli*,[25] breaking his long self-imposed literary silence,[26] Jerome composed a short biography of a monk named Malchus, who was "a Syrian by race and speech."[27] The form of the attractive novel[28] is original in that the hero relates his own life story to Jerome, when the latter was a young hermit in the desert of Chalcis.[29] Now in his peaceful retirement at Bethlehem,[30] Jerome recalls the strange adventures of the captive monk and dramatically recounts the tale of his heroic preservation of chastity. He dedicates his small work to all chaste souls.[31] The ascetic purpose of the little romance is clearly indicated by the author. Exhorting virgins to guard their virginity (*virginitatem custodire*), Jerome urges them to retell the story of Malchus to other chaste souls, "that all may know that chastity (*pudicitiam*) is never taken captive even amid swords and amid deserts and wild beasts, and that a person consecrated to Christ may die but cannot be vanquished."[32]

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[24] See Antin, *op. cit.*, p. 129: "Vivent ces admirables romans [*Vitae*] qui ont charmé et animé au bien tant d'âmes religieuses." Cf. O. Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirchlichen literatur* (Freiburg, 1923), 1.67.

[25] Cavallera, *op. cit.*, 2.156. According to A. Penna (*S. Gerolamo* [Torino, 1949], p. 162), the *Vita Malchi* was probably written in 390/391.

[26] See *Vita Malchi*, Prologus (Mierow, p. 33): "Ita et ego, qui diu tacui . . . ."

[27] *Ibid.*, II (Mierow, p. 35): "Syrus natione et lingua."

[28] Antin, "Le monachisme selon Saint Jérôme," p. 73: "La *Vita Malchi*, 'nouvelle' d'un intéret captivant."

[29] *Vita Malchi* X (Mierow, p. 60): "Haec mihi senex Malchus adulescentulo retulit." See *ibid.*, II (Mierow, p. 35): "Dum ego adulescentulus morarer in Syria."

[30] See *ibid.*, Prologus (Mierow, p. 34): "Saltem fugientem me et clausum."

3. *Vita Hilarionis*

The *Life of Hilarion*[33] was the third work of romantic hagiography produced by Jerome.[34] It is no surprise that the monk of Gaza interested Jerome intensely, for he was "the founder and teacher" (*fundator et eruditor*) of Palestinian monasticism[35] and an intimate friend of Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis,[36] whom Jerome had accompanied to Rome in 382[37] and later visited in Cyprus on his way to Palestine.[38] What fascinated Jerome the most, however, were doubtless Hilarion's early trials and temptations in the desert[39] so akin to those which Jerome experienced in Chalcis. The monk of Bethlehem wanted at all costs to popularize the life of this great and extraordinary Palestinian monk,[40] whom he presented to all ascetics as a perfect pattern of monastic virtues.[41]

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[31] *Ibid*., X (Mierow, p. 60): "Castis historiam castitatis expono."

[32] *Ibid*.

[33] Earlier scholars considered Hilarion as a fictitious personage, but, according to P. de Labriolle, no one agrees with them now. See "De la paix constantinienne à la mort de Théodose," in Fliche-Martin, *Histoire de l'Eglise* (Paris, 1936), 3.310.

[34] It followed closely on the *Vita Malchi*; see Cavallera, *op*. *cit*., 2.30.

[35] *Vita Hilarionis* 14 (*PL* 23.35).

[36] *Ibid*., Prologus (*PL* 23.29): "Qui [Epiphanius] cum Hilarione plurimum versatus est." In the prologue (*ibid*.) Jerome refers to a brief eulogy (*laudem*) in letter-form, which Epiphanius had composed in honor of Hilarion.

Through his biographies of hermits, which were widely read, Jerome contributed a fresh character to hagiographic literature. In the era of persecution, the deeds and heroism of martyrs formed its basis. The struggle now, when the Church entered upon an era of peace, was that of man against himself, the account of which must be offered for the inspiration and edification of ascetic souls.[42] The ascetic purpose of these Vitae, therefore, is strongly marked. Moreover, there is no serious reason to doubt that in Jerome's mind these attractive short stories, as Rand calls them, were meant also to amuse. Thus the ascetic propagandist provided his Christian readers, and especially his fellow ascetics, with something safe to read, and with something as exciting as the pagan readers found in the Greek romances.[43]

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[37] Ep. 127.7 (CSEL 56.150).

[38] Apol. 3.22 (PL 23.495): "Ubi susceptus a venerabili episcopo Epiphanio. . . ."

[39] Vita Hilarionis 3-12 (PL 23.31-34).

[40] Ibid., Prologus (PL 23.29): "Mihi tanti ac talis viri conversatio vitaque dicenda est."

[41] See Ep. 58.5 (CSEL 54.534): "Nos autem habemus propositi nostri Paulos, Antonios, Iulianos, Hilarionas, Macarios."

[42] See Labriolle, op. cit., p. 509.

4. Epitaphia

Jerome wrote a number of epitaphic letters occasioned by deaths among his spiritual daughters.[44] To praise their exemplary ascetic lives was the motive which primarily guided his pen.[45] In the letter to Principia, he answers by anticipation his enemies who might attempt to criticize him for extolling Christian women so preeminently. "Why not?" he argues. "We judge human excellence not by sex but by character."[46] He reminds his proud critics that holy women ministered to Our Lord, that three Marys had the courage to stand by the Cross, and that Mary Magdalen, because of her ardent faith, was privileged to be the first to see the Risen Christ, even before the Apostles.[47] These *epitaphia* are not really biographies; fundamentally, however, they have the same purpose as the *Vita Malchi* and the *Vita Hilarionis*: to preach virginity and the ascetic life.[48]

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[43] See E. K. Rand, The Founders of the Middle Ages (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), pp. 124-125. Cf. T. R. Glover, Life and Letters in the Fourth Century (Cambridge, 1901), pp. 357-386.

[44] Here we note the following letters in chronological order: Ep. 23 (Lea), Ep. 39 (Blesilla), Ep. 66 (Paulina), Ep. 77 (Fabiola), Ep. 108 (Paula), and Ep. 127 (Marcella). To this group must be added Ep. 60 (Nepotianus) and Ep. 75 (Lucinus), each of which Jerome himself entitled epitaphium. See Ep. 77.1 (CSEL 55.37) and Ep. 75.5 (CSEL 55.33). See also Cavallera, "Saint Jérôme et la vie parfaite," RAM 2 (1921), 103, n. 7.

[45] See O. Bardenhewer, Geschichte der altkirchlichen literatur (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1912), 3.654.

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[46] *Ep*. 127.5 (*CSEL* 56.149): "Virtutes non sexu sed animo iudicamus."

[47] *Ibid*.

[48] See M. Viller and K. Rahner, *Aszeze und Mystik in der Väterzeit* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1939), pp. 183-184.

CHAPTER II

ST. JEROME'S CONCEPT OF THE ASCETIC

Jerome conceives the ascetic as a soldier of Christ, an athlete of Christ, a martyr of Christ, and as an inhabitant of Paradise.

1. Jerome Conceives the Ascetic as a Soldier of Christ

(a) Pauline Concept: The Christian as a soldier of Christ

To the early Christian writers the epistles of St. Paul served as one of the most fruitful sources of kerygmatic imagery.[1] It was St. Paul who first conceived Christian life as a warfare.[2] He referred to his companions as soldiers of Christ. Epaphroditus is his "fellow-soldier";[3] and so is Archippus.[4] In his letter to the Corinthians he compares himself to a soldier and claims the right to live by the gospel just as a soldier lives at the expense of the country for which he fights.[5] Timothy is urged to fight "the good fight,"[6] to labor "as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,"[7] and to avoid entangling himself "in worldly affairs."[8] One of the most striking Pauline images is that of the Christian's armor for the battle of the spirit. We find it first in 1 Thessalonians 5.4-9, where the Apostle urges the Christians to live in a state of readiness for "the day of the Lord."[9] As children of the day, he writes, we must be sober and put on the breastplate of faith and charity and the helmet of hope.[10] This passage may be modeled on Isaia 59.17, where Yahweh puts on the garments of vengeance, the mantle of zeal, with the breastplate of justice and the helmet of salvation.[11] Writing to the Ephesians St. Paul names other weapons that make up the "armor of God."[12] To stand victorious the soldier of Christ must put on the breastplate of justice, and take up the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit.[13] These weapons the Christian soul must employ in its constant struggle "against the Principalities and the Powers of darkness."[14] In the Ephesians the battle is much more imaginatively conceived than in 1 Thessalonians. In the latter epistle the Christian struggle is not so much with "the spiritual forces of wickedness" as with ourselves and with the implications of the Gospel message.[15]

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[1] Cf. H. Musurillo, Symbolism and the Christian Imagination (Baltimore, 1962), pp. 13-26.

[2] Cf. B. Bourguignon and F. Wenner, "Combat spiritual," DSp 2 (Paris, 1953), 1136; F. Prat, "Un aspect de l'ascèse dans Saint Paul," RAM 2 (1921), 3-22; A. Viti, "Militum Christi Regis Arma Iuxta S. Paulum," Verbum Domini 7 (1927), 310-318.

[3] Phil. 2.25.

[4] Philemon 2.

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[5] 1 Cor. 9.7.

[6] 1 Tim. 1.18.

[7] 2 Tim. 2.3.

[8] *Ibid.*, 2.4.

[9] 1 Thess. 5.2.

[10] *Ibid.*, 5.8-9.

[11] Musurillo, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21.

[12] *Eph*. 6.13.

(b) Tertullian and Cyprian: The Martyr as a Soldier of Christ[16]

After the example of St. Paul, the early Christian writers made use of this concept of the spiritual life of a Christian as a *militia spiritualis*.

With the advent of persecutions, those who bore the brunt of the battle--that is to say, the martyrs--were in a special manner considered as *milites Christi*. This concept of the martyr appears early in the works of Tertullian. In his *Ad martyras*, written in 197 or 202,[17] he reminds the "martyrs elect"[18] who are languishing in the prison of Carthage, that they are enlisted in the army of Christ at the moment of their baptism. Once they responded to "the sacramental words," they became soldiers of Christ.[19] Now that they are in prison, in the kingdom of the devil himself,[20] they must trample under foot the enemy whom they had already defeated in pitched battle outside the prison.[21] Being soldiers of Christ, they must accustom themselves to all manner of hardships, just as the professional soldiers do. Even in time of peace soldiers must toughen themselves by a training that prepares them for actual fighting: they must march in arms, run across fields, dig trenches, and perform the tortoise-shield maneuver.[22] Soldiers of Christ too must undergo a harsh training. Whatever is hard in the present situation Tertullian asks them to consider as an exercise of their powers of mind and body. Their strength must be built up by austerity, otherwise it will be destroyed by softness.[23]

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[13] *Ibid*., 6.14; 16-17. According to Jerome, St. Paul quoted Isaia 59.17 when he wrote to the Ephesians about Christian warfare. See *Comment. in Esaiam* 59.16-18 (*CC* 73A [1963], p. 687): "Hoc testimonio usus est Paulus ad Ephesios; et volens nos indui armatura Christi . . . ."

[14] *Eph*., 6.12.

[15] Musurillo, *op. cit*., p. 21.

[16] Cf. H. Leclercq, "Martyr," *DACL* 10.2 (1932), 2359-2366; M. Viller, "Martyre et perfection," *RAM* 6 (1925), 3-25; *idem*, "Les martyres et l'ascèse," *RAM* 6 (1925), 105-142; E. L. Hummel, *The concept of martyrdom according to St. Cyprian of Carthage*, *SCA* 9 (Washington, 1946), pp. 1-20.

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[17] J. Quasten, *Patrology*, 2 (Westminster, Md., 1953), p. 292; G. D. Schlegel, "The *Ad martyras* of Tertullian and the Circumstances of Its Composition," *Downside Review* 43 (1945), 125-128. For a good introduction on the *Ad martyras* see R. Arbesmann in *FC* 40 (New York, 1959), pp. 13-16.

[18] *Ad martyras* 1.1 (*CC* 1.1.3): "beati martyres designati."

[19] *Ibid*., 3.1 (*CC* 1.1.5): "Vocati sumus ad militiam Dei vivi iam tunc, cum in sacramenti verba respondimus."

[20] *Ibid*., 1.5 (*CC* 1.1.3).

[21] *Ibid*., 1.4 (*CC* 1.1.3).

[22] *Ibid*., 3.2 (*CC* 1.1.4).

The concept of the martyr as the *miles Christi* is especially elaborated by St. Cyprian.[24] Since his treatises and letters were widely read, Harnack observes, this figure of speech became a favorite one with the Christian writers of the fourth century.[25]

(c) Jerome: The Ascetic as a soldier of Christ

According to Harnack, the concept of the ascetic as the soldier of Christ originated with Origen.[26] It is the ascetic who leads Christians of every age in the spiritual war, employing the weapons of prayer, penance, and the practice of virtue and good works.[27]

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[23] *Ibid*., 3.3 (*CC* 1.1.5-6). For the appeal to examples of "pagan martyrs," made by Tertullian and other early Fathers, see H. Musurillo, *The Acts of the Pagan Martyrs*. *Acta Alexandrinorum* (Oxford, 1954), pp. 243-246; *idem*, "The Pagan Acts of the Martyrs," *Theological Studies* 10 (Baltimore, 1949), 562-563.

[24] Cf. J. C. Capmany, "Miles Christi en la espiritualidad de San Cipriano," *Colectanea San Paciano, serie teologica* 1 (Barcelona, 1956); E. E. Malone, *The Monk and the Martyr*, *SCA* 12 (Washington, 1950), pp. 99-100; E. L. Hummel, *The Concept of Martyrdom According to St. Cyprian of Carthage*, *SCA* 9 (Washington, 1946), pp. 56-90.

[25] Cf. A. Harnack, *Militia Christi, die christliche Religion und der Soldatenstand in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Tübingen, 1915), pp. 40-41.

[26] *Ibid*., p. 28: "Origines ist der Vater des Gedankens in den katholischen Kirchen geworden, dass der Asket (ihm sollte bald der Mönch folgen) der eigentliche Streiter Christi ist."

In St. Jerome we find the concept of the ascetic as a soldier of Christ prominently presented at the very beginning of his own ascetical life, particularly in his letter to Heliodorus.[28] In it the influence of Tertullian's *Ad martyras* is discernible, especially in the description Jerome gives of the *miles delicatus*[29]--the ascetic who is unprepared for the spiritual warfare. Comparisons drawn from military life would appeal to his life-long friend from Altinum who but recently served in the Roman army.[30]

Jerome reminds Heliodorus that the day of baptism is the day of enlistment in Christ's army. From that moment the Christian ascetic commences a period of basic training. The Saint warns him: "Remember the day when you enlisted as a recruit."[31] On that day too the ascetic takes an oath of allegiance to Christ. Jerome reminds his friend of that oath. "You have pronounced the words of the oath."[32] For the sake of Christ the ascetic vows to show pity to no one not even to his mother or father.[33] Re-echoing a Senecan controversia from his Roman schooldays, Jerome declaims: "Though your father fling himself upon the threshold, trample him underfoot and go your way."[34] No matter how heart-rending the separation, the recruit makes the required sacrifice without shedding a tear. To reach the standard of the Cross it is the son's duty, if necessary, to show even cruelty to those dearest to him.[35]

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[27] *Ibid*. For Origen's description of the panoply of a Christian soldier, see S. T. Bettencourt, *Doctrina ascetica Origenis, seu quid docuerit de ratione animae humanae cum daemonibus*, in *Studia Anselmiana* 16 (Rome, 1945), pp. 35-46. See also A. Stolz, *L'Ascesi cristiana* (Morcelliana, 1944), pp. 99-111.

[28] *Ep*. 14 (*CSEL* 54.44-62).

[29] *Ibid*., 2 (*CSEL* 54.46): "Quid facis in paterna domo, delicate miles?"

[30] *Ibid*., 6 (*CSEL* 54.53): "Nam cum derelicta militia castrasti te propter regnum caelorum . . . ."

[31] *Ibid*., 2.2 (*CSEL* 54.46): "Recordare tirocinii tui diem, quo . . . in baptismate consepultus . . . ." See Col. 2.12.

Once the basic training has begun, the recruit belongs in the camp. There he must go through the usual drills which toughen him for the future engagement. Heliodorus, therefore, has no business in his father's house; as a recruit he belongs in the camp.[36] Borrowing expressions from Tertullian's Ad martyras, Jerome declaims:

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[32] Ibid.: "Christo . . . in sacramenti verba iurasti."

[33] Ibid.: "Pro nomine eius non te matri parciturum esse, non patri."

[34] Ibid., 2 (CSEL 54.47): "Licet in limine pater iaceat, per calcatum perge patrem . . . ." See Seneca, Contr. 1.18.15: "Novissime ante limen exeuntis cadaver hoc sternam: ut ad hostem pervenias, patrem calca."

[35] Ep. 14.2.3 (CSEL 54.47): "Siccis oculis ad vexillum crucis vola"; Ibid.: "Pietatis genus est in hac re esse crudelem."

[36] See note 29.

"Where is the rampart? Where is the trench? Where is the winter spent under the canvas?"[37] When the trumpet sounds, and the commander-in-chief appears, the soldier of Christ, toughened by training and accustomed to hardships, must stand ready for battle.[38] That will be no time for a pampered soldier. Jerome continues: "And will you sally forth from your room to the battle field, from the shade to the sun? A body that is used to a tunic cannot support a cuirass; a head that has worn a linen hood shrinks from a helmet; a hand that idleness has softened is galled by a hard sword-hilt."[39]

Inspired by a vision of the divine warrior of the Apocalypse,[40] Jerome presents Christ as the supreme commander--*imperator*[41]--a name which St. Cyprian had already applied to Christ.[42] When the supreme commander comes amid the clouds to subdue the world, the soldier of Christ must be ready to take his place in Christ's ranks.[43]

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[37] *Ep*. 14.2.1-2 (*CSEL* 54.46): "Ubi vallum, ubi fossa, ubi hiemps acta sub pellibus." See Tert., *Ad martyras* 3.2 (*CC* 1.1.5): "Etiam in pace labore et incommodis bellum pati iam ediscunt, . . . fossam moliendo . . ."; *ibid*., 3.1 (*CC* 1.1.5): "Nemo miles ad bellum cum deliciis procedit, nec de cubiculo ad aciem venit, sed de papilionibus, . . . ubi omnis duritia et inbonitas et insuavitas constitit." Cf. Arbesmann, *op*. *cit*., p. 22.

[38] See *Ep*. 14.2 (*CSEL* 54.46): "Ecce de caelo tuba canit, cum nubibus debellaturus orbem imperator armatus egreditur."

[39] *Ibid*.: "Et tu mihi de cubiculo ad aciem de umbra egrederis ad solem? Corpus adsuetum tunica loricae onus non suffert, caput opertum linteo galeam recusat, mollem otio manum durus exasperat capulus." For the translation see F. A. Wright, *Select Letters of St. Jerome*, *Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge, 1954), p. 31.

[40] *Apoc*. 19.11-15; 21-22. See *ibid*., 1.16.

[41] See note 38.

In his letter to Eustochium Jerome presents the life of the ascetic as a service in the army of Christ. Undoubtedly the life of a soldier is hard. On the march, for example, he must carry on his back the camp-stake, the weapons, and the rations; he must grow weary under his heavy breastplate.[44] But after the trial of hardship comes the joy of victory.[45] So in the case of the ascetic. His life too is a hard one. But if he loves Christ and remains loyal to Him, then that which is difficult will seem easy, that which is long will seem short.[46]

(d) The Enemy and The Battleground

The antagonist of the ascetic is the Devil.

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[42] Cyprian, Ep. 15.1 (CSEL 3.2.513): "Nam cum omnes milites Christi custodire oporteat praecepta imperatoris sui . . . ." Cf. Hummel, op. cit., pp. 56-58.

[43] Jerome, Ep. 14.2 (CSEL 54.46).

[44] Ep. 22.39 (CSEL 54.206-7): "Nonne melius est brevi tempore dimicare, ferre vallum, arma, cibaria, lassescere sub lorica . . .?"

[45] Ibid.: "et postea gaudere victorem . . . ."

[46] Ibid., 40 (CSEL 54.207): "Amemus et nos Christum . . . et facile videbitur omne difficile. Brevia putabimus universa, quae longa sunt . . . ." See ibid., 39 (CSEL 54.205): "Haec omnia, quae digessimus, dura videbuntur ei, qui non amat Christum."

Borrowing Virgil's description of war, Jerome paints the antagonist as an enemy with a "thousand names, a thousand arts of ill."[47] In his Commentary on the parable of the Prodigal Son, composed at the request of Pope Damasus,[48] Jerome enumerates more than ten names under which the Devil is known in the Scriptures.[49]

The desert is the Devil's special battleground. To combat Satan the ascetic must leave his country and wage war against his enemy in the desert.[50] No one--not even Our Lord--achieved success in one's own country.[51] An ascetic cannot achieve perfection in his native land. Such a one who promises to tend toward perfection and remains at home does not firmly desire perfection.[52] Jerome invites his friend Heliodorus to ponder the meaning of the term *monachus*. He concludes: "Your name is

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[47] *Ep*. 14.4.2 (*CSEL* 54.50): "Persequitur me, inquam, hostis 'cui nomina mille, mille nocendi artes.'" See Virgil, *Aeneid* 7.337-8.

[48] *Ep*. 21 (*CSEL* 54.111-142). See *ibid*., 2 (*CSEL* 54.115): ". . . tres parabolas [dominus] posuit . . . tertia vero duorum filiorum; de qua ut disputarem pauca, iussisti." This Commentary is listed in Jerome's *De viris inl*. 135 (Richardson, p. 55) under the title: "de frugi et luxurioso filiis."

[49] *Ep*. 21.11 (*CSEL* 54.120).

[50] *Ep*. 14.2 (*CSEL* 54.46): "Quid facis in paterna domo, delicate miles?"

[51] *Ibid*., 7 (*CSEL* 54.54): "Ex hac supputatione illa summa nascitur, monachum perfectum in patria sua esse non posse."

[52] *Ibid*.: "Perfectum autem esse nolle delinquere est."

'solitary'; why then are you still in the crowd?"[53]

Like a cunning foe the devil battles the ascetic with varied stratagems.[54] In the solitude he roams like a roaring lion seeking to devour him;[55] here he wields his sword with which to slay Christ in his heart.[56] Like a pirate captain he too carries chains with which to bind his future captives.[57]

In the desert Satan tempts the ascetic with hunger, with avarice; he attacks him with pangs of disease, with threats of death; he assails him with his fiery darts which the shield of faith alone can render harmless.[58]

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[53] Ibid., 6 (CSEL 54.52): "Interpretare vocabulum monachi, hoc est nomen tuum: quid facis in turba, qui solus es?" Due to Jerome's influence the neologism monachus found a permanent place in the Latin language. See G. M. Colombás, "El concepto de monje y vida monástica hasta fines del siglo V," Studia Monastica 1 (1959), 261-62.

[54] Ep. 22.29 (CSEL 54.186-87). "Variis callidus hostis pugnat insidiis . . . . Unde et apostolus: 'Non,' inquit, 'ignoramus eius astutias.'" See also Ep. 3.5 (CSEL 54.16).

[55] Ep. 14.4 (CSEL 54.49). See 1 Peter 5.8.

[56] Ibid., 2 (CSEL 54.46): "Ecce adversarius in pectore tuo Christum conatur occidere." See ibid., 3 (CSEL 54.48): "Gladium tenet hostis, ut me perimat . . . ."

[57] Ibid., 6 (CSEL 54.52): "Hic diabolus pirata cum sociis portat vincla capiendis . . . ."

[58] Ep. 3.5 (CSEL 54.16-17). According to Origen's scheme of spiritual warfare, evil thoughts are the fiery darts of Satan. See Bettencourt, op. cit., pp. 62-88.

But Christ is there with His soldier; Christ is there to protect him.[59]

(e) Spiritual Armament of the Ascetic

To withstand the spiritual enemy victoriously, the ascetic of Christ must put on the complete spiritual armor which had been presented to him by St. Paul.[60] Bonosus, like a true warrior of Christ,[61] will don this armor during his stay on the billow-lashed island of the Adriatic.[62] The shield of faith he will especially employ against "the fiery darts" of the enemy.[63] Paul endured the assaults of Satan in his solitude in the Thebaid; no one, however, knows all the wiles the enemy had prepared for him.[64] On his way to visit Paul, Anthony comes upon a strange creature; at once he grasps the shield of faith and the breastplate of hope for self-protection.[65]

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[59] *Ep*. 3.5 (*CSEL* 54.17): "Et, ne multa, inpugnabit satanas, sed tutabitur Christus."

[60] See *Comment*. *in* *Ephesios* 6.13 (*PL* 26.583): "Assumat omnia arma Dei (hoc enim sonat πανοπλία), et omnibus telis armisque succinctus, de quibus in sequentibus explicatur, sciat tunc se stare posse."

[61] Jerome, *Ep*. 3.2 (*CSEL* 54.17): "Memento, quaeso, istum bellatorem tuum."

[62] *Ibid*., 4 (*CSEL* 54.15-16).

[63] *Ibid*., 5 (*CSEL* 54.17): "Ignita iacula vibrabit [diabolus], sed excipientur scuto fidei."

[64] Jerome, *Vita* *Pauli*, *Praef*. (*PL* 23.19): "Quas Satanae pertulerit insidias, nulli hominum compertum habetur."

[65] *Ibid*., 8 (*PL* 23.23): "Ad hoc Antonius spectaculum, scutum fidei et loricam spei, ut bonus praeliator, arripuit."

In his earlier writings Jerome alludes to the full armor of a Christian described by St. Paul,[66] but enumerates only four pieces of the spiritual equipment: the shield,[67] the breastplate,[68] the sword, and the helmet.[69] In his Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians, he extensively explains the symbolic meaning of the complete armor of the ascetic of Christ.[70]

(f) Christ the Victor in the Ascetic

It was the conviction of the martyrs that Christ, Who was present in them, gave them strength to endure the torments of martyrdom. Their victory over Satan was the victory of Christ.[71] One of the earliest proofs of this conviction is offered by Felicitas, the companion of Perpetua. Replying to the taunts of her prison guards, as she was about to give birth to a child, Felicitas remarked: "Now it is I who bear this suffering; there [in the arena], however, Another will be in me to suffer for me, because I too will suffer for Him."[72]

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[66] Ep. 3.4 (CSEL 54.16): "Ille securus, intrepidus et totus de apostolo armatus."

[67] See note 63 above.

[68] See note 65 above. Also Ep. 14.2 (CSEL 54.46): "Corpus adsuetum tunica loricae onus non suffert."

[69] Ep. 14.2 (CSEL 54.46): "Caput opertum linteo galeam recusat, mollem otio manum durus exasperat capulus."

[70] Comment. in Eph. 6.13-17 (PL 26.583-586).

[71] See Hummel, op. cit., pp. 91-93.

Later the ascetics and the monks began to view their victories in the struggles with Satan as victories of Christ.[73] When St. Athanasius recorded "Antony's first triumph over the Devil," he added: "Rather, let me say that this triumph in Antony was the Savior's."[74] This very thought Jerome expressed in one of his Homilies: "It is Jesus Who is victorious in His martyr; it is He who is crowned in His martyr."[75] This concept of "Christ crowned in His martyr" had been already expressed by St. Cyprian when he wrote to the martyrs and confessors of Carthage: "He [the Lord] is not one who merely observes His servants, but He Himself fights in us, He Himself is engaged, and in the contest of our struggle He not only crowns, but is Himself crowned."[76]

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[72] *Passio SS. Perpetuae et Felicitatis* 15.6 (ed. C. I. M. I. van Beek 1 [Nijmegen, 1936], p. 38): "Modo ego patior quod patior; illic autem alius erit in me qui patietur pro me, quia et ego pro illo passura sum."

[73] Cf. Malone, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-107.

[74] *Vita Antonii* 7 (*PG* 26.852A). See R. T. Meyer, *St. Athanasius: The Life of Saint Antony* (Westminster, Md., 1950), p. 24.

[75] *Tract. de Ps.* 115 (*CC* 78.244): "Iesus vincit in suo martyre; ipse in suo martyre coronatur."

[76] *Ep.* 10.4 (*CSEL* 3.2.494): "Ipse [Dominus] luctatur in nobis, ipse congreditur, ipse in certamine agonis nostri et coronat pariter et coronatur." See *ibid.*, 3 (*CSEL* 3.2.492): "Quam laetus illic Christus fuit, quam libens in talibus servis suis et pugnavit et vicit protector fidei;" ibid.: "Et qui pro nobis mortem semel vicit semper vincit in nobis." Cf. Hummel, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-93.

2. Jerome Conceives the Ascetic as an Athlete of Christ

It was St. Paul who first compared the life of a Christian to an athletic contest.[77] To his Corinthians he wrote: "I, therefore, so run as not without a purpose; I so fight as not beating the air; but I chastise my body and bring it into subjection. . . ."[78] Already in the earliest Christian writings we find the struggles of the martyrs compared to the struggles of the athletes in the arena. Writing to Polycarp, St. Ignatius of Antioch urged the bishop of Smyrna to bear all his afflictions in prison "as a perfect athlete."[79] The faithful of Lyons and Vienne extolled the slave girl Blandina as a hero, for though mangled by her tormentors she continued to proclaim her faith "like a noble athlete."[80] In the preface to his fifth book of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Eusebius states the purpose of his work--to relate for all ages the brave deeds "of the athletes of religion."[81]

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[77] Cf. F. Prat, *La théologie de Saint Paul* (Paris, 1923), pp. 415-426; Musurillo, *op. cit.*, p. 21; H. Leclercq, "Athlète," *DACL* 1 (1907), 3105-3111.

[78] 1 Cor. 9.26-27. The Apostle uses a striking boxing metaphor. Cf. Musurillo, *op. cit.*, p. 21; F. Prat, *The Theology of St. Paul* (New York, 1927), 2.347, note 1.

[79] *Ep. ad Polycarpum* 1.3 (Funk-Bihlmeyer ed., 111): ὡς τέλειος ἀθλητής.

[80] Eusebius, *H. E.* 5.1.19 (*GCS* 2.1.408.24): ὡς γενναῖος ἀθλητής.

[81] *Ibid.*, 5, *Praef.* 1.4 (*GCS* 2.1.400.21): τῶν εὐσεβείας ἀθλητῶν.

In the epilogue of his letter to Heliodorus, Jerome reminds his friend of the sacrifices the athlete must undergo to win his crown. "Are you frightened by the thought of toil? No athlete gains his crown without sweat."[82] The Saint clearly implies that also the ascetic must be another athlete--a Christian athlete--who is not frightened by the thought of hardships that await him in the contest for his crown.

Writing to Eustochium Jerome compares our present life to an athletic contest. "For mortals this life is a race."[83] This contest, however, is a protracted one; in fact, in the case of the ascetic it is not limited only to the Lenten season, but must last throughout his life.[84] Therefore, the crown of victory can only be attained in the future life. "We run it [race] on earth that we may receive our crown elsewhere."[85] For this reason Eustochium must never feel completely secure; she must be vigilant at all times, following the example of St. Paul, who though he was "the chosen vessel," chastised his body and brought it into subjection.[86]

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[82] *Ep*. 14.10.3 (*CSEL* 54.60): "Labore terreris? Sed nemo athleta sine sudoribus coronatur."

[83] *Ep*. 22.3.1 (*CSEL* 54.146): "Stadium est haec vita mortalibus." Jerome defines *stadium* in the treatise composed in memory of Fabiola (*Ep*. 78.21; *CSEL* 55.68): "In quo [stadio] exercentur pugiles et athletae et cursorum velocitas conprobatur."

[84] *Ep*. 107.10.3 (*CSEL* 55.301): "Virgo et monachus sic in quadragesima suos emittant equos, ut sibi meminerint semper esse currendum."

[85] *Ep*. 22.3 (*CSEL* 54.146): "Hic contendimus, ut alibi coronemur."

In the Christian race Christ Himself is the divine referee, ἀγωνοθέτης.[87] In His hand He holds the awards of victory, beckoning candidates to the race.[88] They are free to enter or not to enter the contest.[89] In the traditional foot races only one contestant received the prize, as St. Paul points out.[90] In the Christian race, however, all who enter and persevere to the end receive the award.[91] In his first letter to Rufinus Jerome had expressed the hope that their mutual friend Bonosus would enjoy "the crown of virtue" at the close of his ascetic life which he just inaugurated on a lonely island.[92]

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[86] *Ep.* 22.5.1 (*CSEL* 54.149-150): "Si Paulus apostolus, vas electionis . . . ob carnis aculeos et incentiva vitiorum reprimit corpus suum et servituti subicit . . . tu te putas securam esse debere?" See Acts 9.15.

[87] *Adv. Iovin.* 1.12 (PL 23.238): "Proponit ἀγωνοθέτης praemium." See *Comm. in Abacuc* 3.19 (*PL* 25.1401): "ab ἀγωνοθέτη Iesu." Cf. note 93 below. In his *De fuga in persecutione* 1.5 (*CC* 2.2.2136), Tertullian defines the term: "Obviously, then, the superintendent of the games and the one who sets the prize is the one who decides who is the winner of the contest." He applied the epithet to God in his *Ad martyras* 3.3 (*CC* 1.1.5): "Bonum agonem subituri estis in quo *agonothetes* Deus vivus est." This concept of God as "a referee" already appears in Clement of Alexandria; see *DACL* I (1907), 3108.

[88] *Adv. Iov.* 1.12 (*PL* 23.238): "Invitat ad cursum, tenet in manu virginitatis bravium."

[89] *Ibid.*: "Non dicit, velitis nolitis . . . currendum; sed qui voluerit, qui potuerit currere . . . ille vincet."

[90] *Ep.* 71.2 (*CSEL* 55.2-3): "Qui in stadio currunt, omnes quidem currunt, unus autem accipit coronam.'" See 1 Cor. 9.24. Here Jerome, perhaps, quoting from memory, substitutes *coronam* for *bravium*.

[91] *Ibid.*: "Coepisse multorum est, ad calcem pervenisse paucorum."

Christ, the divine superintendent of spiritual contests, is not a grudging judge; He does not give the prize to one and dishonor to another. He wants all His athletes to win the garland of victory.[93]

3. Jerome Conceives the Ascetic as a Martyr of Christ[94]

The concept of the ascetic life as equivalent to martyrdom occurs in the writings of Jerome. A virgin consecrated to God keeps her soul ever ready for martyrdom. The chalice is the symbol of that readiness.[95] Jerome instructs the virgin Demetrias: "Even the preservation of chastity involves a martyrdom all its own."[96] And so it is with the observance of poverty for the sake of Christ. Instructing his monks at Bethlehem, the Saint declares: "Poverty too involves a martyrdom."[97] In the funeral eulogy of Paula, the mother of Eustochium, her ascetic life is called "a protracted martyrdom," "a daily martyrdom,"[98] which won for her the crown of lilies and the citizenship of the Savior.[99] In one of his conferences at Bethlehem Jerome feels justified to conclude: "Indeed, even the monks are truly martyrs."[100]

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[92] *Ep*. 3.5 (*CSEL* 54.18): "Fruatur ille virtutis corona."

[93] *Ep*. 71.2 (*CSEL* 55.2-3): "At e contra nobis dicitur: 'Sic currite, ut adprehendatis.' Non est invidus agonitheta noster nec alterius palma alteri parat ignominiam. Omnes athletas suos desiderat coronari."

[94] In his study *The Monk and the Martyr*, Malone (see note 24 above) traces the general outlines of the historical development of the concept of spiritual martyrdom. See especially pp. 44-63: "Monastic life as a spiritual martyrdom." For a review of the work, see C. Mohrmann, *Vigiliae Christianae* 6 (1952), 126-128. For the symbolism of martyrdom and asceticism, see also Musurillo, *op. cit*., pp. 45-66.

[95] *Ep*. 44.1 (*CSEL* 54.322.9-10): "Calices mortificationem carnis ostendunt et semper animam ad martyrium praeparatum." Cf. P. Antin, "Le monachisme sélon S. Jérôme," *Mélanges bénédictines publiés à l'occasion du XIV^{e} centenaire de la mort de Saint Benoît* (Wandrille, 1947), p. 88: "Le calice, qui signifie la mortification de la chair et l'âme prête au martyre, symbolise la vie du moine."

Heliodorus might object and say: "Very well, but all this applies to a Christian who is about to undergo martyrdom." Jerome rejects the implication that the ascetic does not face martyrdom. "You are mistaken, grievously mistaken, my brother, if you think that there is ever a time when the Christian is not suffering persecution." The time has come when another type of persecution is being launched by the enemy--an enemy with "a thousand names, a thousand arts of ill." Self-indulgence, avarice, gluttony, lust--these are the enemies that make furious attacks, that raise new persecutions, that lead Christians into captivity.[101] The era of persecutions continues. More than once Jerome reminds his monks at Bethlehem of this fact: "We have often stated: 'Christians always suffer persecution . . . .' Wherever I turn--there is persecution. If I gaze upon a woman, my eye persecutes me: it aims to slay my soul."[102] Unlawful desires persecute the soul. The Saint adds: "Let us not think that only the shedding of blood constitutes martyrdom; martyrdom is always present."[103]

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[96] Ep. 130.5 (CSEL 56.180.10): "Habet et servata pudicitia martyrium suum."

[97] Hom. in Lucam 16.19-31 (CC 78.516): "Habet et paupertas martyrium suum . . . . Non ergo paupertas simplex . . . sed paupertas propter Xpistum."

[98] Ep. 108.31.1 (CSEL 55.345): "Mater tua longo martyrio coronata est . . . devotae quoque mentis servitus cotidianum martyrium est."

[99] Ibid.: "Mater tua . . . coronata est . . . illa corona de rosis et violis plectitur, ista de liliis." See ibid., 2: "Civis est salvatoris effecta."

[100] Tract. de Ps. 115 (CC 78.245): "Sicut enim martyres laudant Dominum pure in regione vivorum, ita et monachi . . . siquidem et ipsi martyres sunt."

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[101] See _Ep_. 14.4 (_CSEL_ 54.49). Cf. note 47.

[102] _Homilia de persecutione Christianorum_ (_CC_ 78.556): "Frequenter diximus: semper Xpistiani persecutionem patiuntur . . . . Quocumque me vertero, persecutio est. Si videro mulierem, oculus meus me persequitur: cupit interficere animam meam."

[103] _Ibid_.: "Non putemus tantum in effusione sanguinis esse martyrium: semper martyrium est."

4. St. Jerome Conceives the Ascetic as an Inhabitant of Paradise

Bonosus, Jerome's boyhood friend, withdrew from the world to a lonely island in the Adriatic. In that solitude, the Saint wrote to Rufinus, Bonosus fixed his abode to become "another inhabitant of Paradise"--novus paradisi colonus.[104]

This theme of paradise we find already expressed in the Vita Antonii. By his virginal and ascetic life Anthony acquired such extraordinary dominion over himself and over nature that it extended even to wild animals of the desert.[105] St. Athanasius paints a charming picture of the colony of ascetics that encircled the cell of Anthony in the hills. Those cells were "like tents filled with divine choirs." He continues: "And truly it was like seeing a land apart, a land of piety and justice . . . a multitude of ascetics, all with one set purpose--virtue." The spectacle of the new world, wherein all "preserve love and harmony among themselves," extorted from him a cry of admiration:

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[104] Ep. 3.4 (CSEL 54.15): "Insulam . . . quasi quidam novus paradisi colonus insedit."

[105] See Vita Antonii 50 and 52 (PG 26.916-920).

> How fair are thy dwellings, O Jacob--thy tents, O Israel: Like shady glens and like a garden by a river, and like tents that the Lord hath pitched and cedars besides the waters![106]

The cell of the ascetic is isolated, like paradise in the midst of the world. To go out of it, to live in the world by adopting the manners of the world, is to leave paradise. Jerome exclaims: "To me the town is a prison, and the wilderness a paradise!"[107] And he urges Rusticus to consider his own cell a paradise.[108]

In his exhortation to Heliodorus, Jerome tells his friend that when he begins his hermit life in the desert of Chalcis, he too, like the first dweller in the garden of Eden, will enjoy "God's familiar presence."[109] In thought he will ascend to paradise and roam there without any fear of the vastness of the desert.[110]

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[106] Ibid., 44 (PG 25.908). See Num. 24.5-6. Cf. Colombás, op. cit., p. 300.

[107] Ep. 125.8.1 (CSEL 127): "Mihi oppidum carcer est et solitudo paradisus,"

[108] Ep. 125.7.3 (CSEL 56.125): "Habeto cellulam pro paradiso."

[109] Ep. 14.10 (CSEL 54.59): "O desertum Christi floribus vernans! O solitudo . . . . o heremus familiari Deo gaudens!" Cf. Genesis 3.8.

[110] Ibid. (CSEL 54.60).

CHAPTER III

THE IDEAL ASCETIC ACCORDING TO ST. JEROME

A. The Complete Renunciation of the Ascetic[1]

1. The Example of St. Anthony

The *Vita Antonii*,[2] which Jerome ascribes to Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria,[3] relates how at the beginning of his ascetic life Anthony made an act of complete renunciation. First of all, the property he had inherited from his forebears he donated to the people of his town. The rest of his belongings he sold and gave the money to the poor, keeping back only a small sum for his younger sister. But even this sum he distributed to the poor when he heard the Lord saying in the Gospel: *Be not solicitous for the morrow*. Then placing his sister in the care of some trusted virgins, he left his native town and went to the next village to stay with an old ascetic.[4] Later he completely severed himself from the society of men by living in an empty cemetery vault at a considerable distance from the village.[5] Thus it may be said that Anthony made a threefold renunciation: of his possessions, of his family, and of the world.[6]

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[1] For the scriptural basis of Christian renunciation see P. Pourrat, *Christian Spirituality* (transl. W. H. Mitchell and S. P. Jacques, London, 1922), 1.1-16; J. De Guibert, "Abnégation," *DSp* 1.67-73. For the early patristic doctrine on renunciation see E. Dublanchy, "Ascétisme," *DTC* 1.2073-2077; R. Daeschler, "Abnégation," *DSp* 1.73-82; M. Viller and M. Olphe-Galliard, "L'Ascèse chrétienne," *DSp* 1.960-977.

[2] *PG* 26.835-976. For the authorship and historicity of the work see G. Bardy, "Antoine (Saint)," *DSp* 1.702-708; R. Meyer, *The Life of Saint Antony* (Westminster, Md., 1950), 8-14; L. von Hurtling, "Studi storici antoniani negli ultimi trent'anni," *Studia Anselmiana* 38 (Rome, 1956), 13-34. But see also H. Musurillo, "The Problem of Ascetical Fasting in the Greek Patristic Writers," *Traditio* 12 (1956), 27-29.

[3] *De viris inl.* 88 (Richardson, p. 45): "Antonius monachus, cuius vitam Athanasius, Alexandriae episcopus, insigni volumine prosecutus est."

2. The Doctrine and Practice of St. Jerome

We know that during his stay at Treves Jerome was profoundly attracted to a life of asceticism. It is likely that the Antonian example of renunciation may have been one of the factors that influenced his ascetical vocation, for it was at Treves that Athanasius himself had sown the seeds of ascetic life by his account of the virtues of Anthony and his disciples.[7] P. Antin goes so far as to maintain that already in Gaul Jerome got acquainted with the Life of Anthony by Athanasius.[8]

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[4] *Vita Antonii* 2-3 (*PG* 26.841-845).

[5] *Ibid*., 8 (*PG* 26.853-856).

[6] The Greek author of the *Vita S. Pachomii* 22 (*PL* 73.243) tells us that Pachomius required a threefold renunciation of his monks, namely: renunciation of the world, of one's family, and of one's self. It is the teaching of Cassian (*Conlatio* 3.6, *CSEL* 13.73) that according to Scripture and patristic tradition there are three ascetic renunciations.

[7] Cavallera, *op. cit*., 1.18.

When Jerome decided to depart for the east, he too gave up his family, his friends and the world and buried himself in the desert. Upon his arrival at Chalcis, he drew up and, like the most scrupulous of Anthony's disciples, he followed a program of eremitic life. He dwelt in a cave; he wore a garment of the coarsest sackcloth, he fasted frequently, at times on bread and water; at night he slept on the bare ground. His skin became rough and dirty like the skin of an Ethiopian.[9]

As he initiates his eremitic life, Jerome begins to teach a doctrine of complete renunciation. He tells Heliodorus that the ascetic must break all family ties and cast aside all attachment to earthly possessions.[10] With pride and joy he informs Rufinus that Bonosus had made such an act of renunciation. Their mutual friend, writes Jerome, had forsaken his "mother, his sisters, his dearly beloved brother . . . and even the little Onesimus . . . in whose kisses he used to rejoice as in those of a brother." Moreover he had given up the society of men. On the desolate island where he had settled no peasant or monk was to be found. Bonosus, however, is without worry or fear, for Christ is with him.[11]

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[8] Essai sur Saint Jérôme (Paris, 1951), p. 44: "Jérôme lui aussi, évidemment, avait lu l'"Antoine" d'Athanase." Augustine reveals in the Confessiones 8.6.14 that the Vita was one of the deciding influences in his own conversion. Ponticianus, who related the story of Anthony to him, probably knew it in the Latin version of Evagrius. See Meyer, op. cit., p. 14 and p. 104, note 45.

[9] See esp. Ep. 22.7 (CSEL 54.152-154).

[10] Ep. 14.1 (CSEL 54.45).

After breaking all family ties, the ascetic must give up all possessions in order to be poor with Christ. "Naked yourself follow the naked Christ," Jerome tells the monk Rusticus.[12] Christ's precept: "Vende omnia quae habes et da pauperibus," he frequently repeats to his disciples of asceticism.[13] Thus his doctrine of renunciation is addressed exclusively to those who seek the perfect life and the evangelical ideal. He expresses this principle in the Adversus Iovinianum: "Are all commanded . . . to sell all they possess and give to the poor and follow Jesus? Of course not. The command is for those who wish to be perfect."[14] In his letter to Hedybia, a lady in Gaul, he indicates a double degree of detachment: the first degree is to give all one's possessions to the poor; the second degree is to leave all possessions to one's family.[15]

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[11] Ep. 3.4 (CSEL 54.15).

[12] Ep. 125.20 (CSEL 56.142): "Nudum Christum nudus sequere." Similar expressions occur in his letters to Heliodorus, Ep. 14.1 (CSEL 54.45) and to Nepotianus, Ep. 52.5 (CSEL 54.422).

[13] For example, Paulinus: Ep. 58.2 (CSEL 54.529); Pammachius: Ep. 66.8 (CSEL 54.656); Julianus: Ep. 118.4 (CSEL 55.439); Hedybia: Ep. 120.1.2 and 1.12 (CSEL 55. 474 and 478); Demetrias: Ep. 130.14 (CSEL 56.193); Presidius: Bulletin anc. litt. archéol. chrét. 3 (1913), 54-58.

[14] Adv. Iovin. 2.6 (PL 23.307). See P. Antin, "Saint Jérôme et l'argent," La Vie spirituelle 79 (1948), 293: "La doctrine spirituelle de saint Jérôme est en principe pour ceux qui cherchent la vie parfaite, l'Evangile intégral."

The renunciation of the world by the ascetic is but the logical consequence of his promises made at baptism.[16] While baptismal renunciation is a renunciation in spirit of the deeds of this world, ascetical renunciation is a renunciation de facto of the goods and freedoms of this world according to the letter of the gospel.[17] This doctrine Jerome imparts to Demetrias when he designates her renunciation of the world as "the second step after baptism," by which she renewed her contract with the prince of this world in these words: "I renounce thee, Satan, and thy world with all its pomps and works."[18] Thus the ascetic's threefold renunciation becomes a sort of extension of his baptismal renunciation: it completes and perfects that which was made at baptism.[19]

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[15] Ep. 120.1 (CSEL 55.477-478).

[16] Daeschler, "Abnégation," DSp 1.79.

[17] A. Lambert, "Apotactites et Apotaxamènes," DTC 1.2606.

[18] Ep. 130.7 (CSEL 56.186): "Nunc autem, quia saeculum reliquisti et secundo post baptismum gradu inisti pactum cum adversario tuo dicens ei: 'Renuntio tibi, diabole, et saeculo tuo et pompae tuae et operibus tuis,' serva foedus quod pepigisti." On the "Pomps of Satan" see J. H. Waszink, "Pompa diaboli," VChr 1 (1947), 13-41.

Jerome does not equate poverty with the mere abandonment of worldly possessions. The renunciation of these is but the first step, after which the ascetic must rise to the detachment from all created things and to the union with Christ by love and imitation. Jerome expresses this doctrine in his Homily on Luke: "Poverty too has its martyrdom; poverty patiently suffered makes martyrs. But it must be poverty out of love for Christ, not out of necessity."[20] To Demetrias he points out that the summit of perfect and apostolic virtue is universal renunciation, by which, freed from all earthly encumbrance, she can fly to the heavenly realms with Christ.[21]

Jerome stresses the point that it is important to act for Christ and not for oneself.[22] He warns his monks against vainglory: "A poor man asks you for money. Why do you give alms in public and not in secret? If you seek God as your witness, why do you need the eyes of men?"[23] There are some who bring an announcer along when they are about to give a piece of bread and two small coins.[24] Others, as they stretch out their hand to give an alms, keep glancing about on all sides. If there is no witness to their deed, they draw back their hand. Caustically Jerome remarks that there's not even one person in a thousand who does not act in this manner.[25]

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[19] Lambert, loc. cit. See G. Morin, The Ideal of the Monastic Life Found in the Apostolic Age (transl. C. Gunning, Westminster, Md., 1950), pp. 53-54: "This is the monk's threefold renunciation--a renunciation which supports, completes, and perfects that which was made in Baptism."

[20] Hom. in Lucam 16.19-31 (CC 78.516): "Habet et paupertas martyrium suum, et egestas bene tolerata facit martyrium, sed egestas propter Xpistum, non propter necessitatem."

[21] Ep. 130.14 (CSEL 56.193). See Comment. in Matt. 19.21 (PL 26.142).

[22] Tract. de Ps. 103 (CC 78.288): "Ista misericordia non Xpisti misericordia, sed sui misericordia est."

To give up one's goods does not mean that we should get rid of them according to our whims. Above all we must not give to the well fed but to the hungry.[26] In the funeral oration composed in Paula's honor, Jerome praises her prudence in almsgiving. "She gave her money to each according as each had need, not ministering to self-indulgence but relieving want. No poor person went away from her empty handed. All this she was able to accomplish not by the greatness of her wealth but by the careful management of it."[27]

Jerome could well speak as he did, for he lived in accordance with his doctrine. His disinterestedness was above suspicion. To his Roman calumniators he hurled the challenge: "Have I ever taken any one's money? Have I not disdained all gifts, whether small or great? Has the clink of any one's coin been heard in my hand?"[28] The saint put into practice the lesson of Christ Who was born poor in a cave at Bethlehem. Describing the grotto which sheltered Jesus and Mary, he exclaims: "Where are the mansions furnished by the miserable toil of doomed wretches? Where are the costly halls raised by untitled opulence for man's vile body to walk in? Where are the roofs that intercept the sky, as if anything could be finer than the expanse of heaven?"[29] In order to erect a hostel for pilgrims coming to Bethlehem, Jerome generously decided to sell his remaining property at Stridon.[30] To Rufinus he could boldly declare: "We do not have money, and we are not eager to have it."[31] The saintly scholar would rather devote his time to the study of the Sacred Scriptures than to the amassing of riches.[32] Full of trust in God's providence are the brave words which he wrote to Apronius, after armed bands of Pelagian monks completely destroyed his monastery: "By the mercy of Christ it [the monastery] is still full of spiritual riches. To have nothing to eat but bread is better than to lose one's faith."[33]

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Adv. Pelag. 2.11 (PL 23.572).

[25] Tract. de Ps. 103 (CC 78.288); Adv. Pelag. 2.11 (PL 23.572).

[26] Comment. in Hiez. 18.5-9 (CC 78.238).

[27] Ep. 108.16 (CSEL 55.327).

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[28] Ep. 45.2 (CSEL 54.324).

[29] Ep. 46.11 (CSEL 54.341).

[30] Ep. 66.14 (CSEL 54.665).

[31] Contra Rufinum 1.32 (PL 23.444).

[32] Comment. in Ephesios, Prologus (PL 26.469): "Multo esse melius Scripturas legere, quam augendis et cumulandis opibus inhiare."

It is clear that both for himself and for his spiritual sons and daughters Jerome envisioned salvation only in flight from the world and in complete sacrifice of the goods and pleasures of this life. Rightly does Mitzka observe that with "poverty in spirit" Jerome was not satisfied, but demanded real renunciation, wherever it could be attained.[34] Zealously he sought to win his disciples over to perfect poverty. Since they generally belonged to wealthy families, it was a difficult task, to which he applied himself with untiring energy. He was not satisfied with the fact that his disciples gave rich alms; he required of them complete renunciation of everything that was over and above their necessary livelihood.[35]

Such then is Jerome's basic concept of renunciation. Its extreme severity, however, requires that it be viewed in the light of the Christian motivation he adduces in its support. He recognizes the hardship and sacrifice of complete renunciation, but he sees nothing impossible in such an act. After all, the Apostles, Bonosus and many others had made it. Recalling his own experience, he tells Heliodorus: "I too have passed through trials like these."[36] Someone might voice the objection that Scripture bids us to obey our parents, but Jerome replies: The ascetic must choose Christ rather than his parents.[37] Moreover, what Crates of Thebes and other pagan philosophers have done,[38] *a fortiori* can be done by true Christians, who are the real philosophers of Christ.[39] Furthermore, there's no reason to fear poverty; the poor are declared blessed by Christ. This thought Jerome expands in his *Homily on Luke*: "It is not mere poverty that makes one blessed, but poverty for the sake of Christ. Faith has no fear of hunger. He who loves Christ does not fear hunger; he who has Christ has with him all riches."[40] The ascetic is detached from everything simply that he may be held by nothing in his flight to Christ. And the spiritual power that frees him from all earthly fetters, declares Jerome, is the love of Christ, for "the perfect servant of Christ has nothing but Christ."[41]

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[33] Ep. 139 (CSEL 56.268): "Christo propitio spiritalibus divitiis plena est. Melius est panem manducare quam fidem perdere."

[34] F. Mitzka, "Der hl. Hieronymus als Aszet," Zeitschrift für Aszese und Mystik 1 (1925/26), 177: "Er will wirkliche Lossagung, wo und wie immer sie sich nur erreichen lässt." In very brief compass, the author of the article gives a clear outline of Jerome's basic asceticism.

[35] See ibid., p. 178.

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[36] *Ep*. 14.3 (*CSEL* 54.47).

[37] *Ibid*. (*CSEL* 54.48).

[38] Jerome loves to quote the example of Crates: *Ep*. 58.2 (*CSEL* 54.529); *Adv*. *Iovin*. 2.9 (*PL* 23.312); *Ep*. 118.5 (*CSEL* 55.441).

[39] *Ep*. 33.3 (*CSEL* 54.255); *Adv*. *Iovin*. 2.11 (*PL* 23. 314-315.

[40] *Hom*. *in Lucam* 16.19-31 (*CC* 78.516); *Ep*. 14.1 (*CSEL* 54.45): "Adfatim dives est, qui cum Christo pauper est."

B. The Perfect Chastity of the Ascetic

I. Treatises On Virginity Referred to by Jerome

When in 384[42] Jerome was dedicating his treatise On Virginity to Eustochium, several outstanding treatises on that subject had already flowered in the East and in the West. It was precisely in Africa that treatises first appeared which *ex professo* were devoted to the exhortation of virgins.[43] In his own treatise Jerome recommends to the Roman virgin the works of four Latin writers in particular: Cyprian and Tertullian of the third century, and Damasus and Ambrose, his contemporaries.

Of St. Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, Jerome singles out one particular writing, praising it as "an excellent work." In his letter to Demetrias he mentions it by title: "The blessed Cyprian too has left a notable work _On Virginity_." Undoubtedly this Cyprianic work is the _De habitu virginum_, of which we find traces in Jerome's own treatise composed for Eustochium.[44]

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[41] *Ep.* 14.6 (*CSEL* 54.53): "Perfectus autem servus Christi nihil praeter Christum habet."

[42] See Cavallera, *Saint Jérôme* 2.155.

[43] See Th. Camelot, "Les traités *De virginitate au IV siècle*," in *Mystique et Continence* (*Etudes Carmélitaines* 31 [Paris, 1952]), p. 273.

One treatise of Tertullian Jerome mentions by title, namely, _Ad amicum philosophum_, which is now lost. In his early days as a Christian, Tertullian addressed it to a philosophic friend, pointing out the vexations of the married life. According to Jerome Pope Damasus also composed a _carmen_ and a _sermo de virginitate_, both of which are no longer extant.[45]

It is with much enthusiasm that Jerome recommends to Eustochium the treatises (_opuscula_) of St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan. On these writings he bestows the highest praise. "In them," he writes, "our own Ambrose poured forth his soul with eloquence; in them he has sought out, set forth and arranged all that touches the praise of virginity."[46] Among these _opuscula_ must surely be included Ambrose's _De_ virginibus, the first treatise in date, dedicated to his sister Marcellina and to other consecrated virgins, and the De virginitate, which was composed probably in 377.[47]

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[44] _Ep_. 22.22 (_CSEL_ 54.175); _Ep_. 130.19 (_CSEL_ 56.200). See A. Keenan, _Thasci Caecilii Cypriani De Habitu Virginum_ (_CUPS_ 34 [1932]), pp. 35-38.

[45] _Ep_. 22.22 (_CSEL_ 54.175). See B. Altaner, _Patrology_ (New York, 1960), p. 415.

[46] _Ep_. 22.22 (_CSEL_ 54.175).

Less than ten years later in his De viris inlustribus Jerome enumerates four Greek writers On virginity. Chronologically they are: Methodius, Athanasius, Basil of Ancyra, and Gregory of Nazianzus.

It is Jerome who gives the first clear reference to Methodius.[48] Several times he refers to him as episcopus et martyr.[49] Epiphanius of Cyprus, whom Jerome accompanied to Rome in 382, refers to him as "the blessed presbyter."[50] In his De viris Jerome lists Methodius' work on virginity under the title Symposium decem virginum, which is preserved in full in its Greek original.[51]

In the case of Athanasius and Basil of Ancyra, Jerome simply gives the title of their treatises.[52] When he mentions Gregory's treatise, he adds that the work consists of a poetical dialogue between Virginity and Marriage.[53]

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[47] Cf. H. Dudden, The Life and Times of St. Ambrose (Oxford, 1935), 2.695.

[48] See H. Musurillo, Méthode D'Olympe: Le Banquet (SChr 95 [Paris, 1963]), Introd., p. 9.

[49] For the texts see G. N. Bonwetsch, Methodius (GCS 27 [1917]), Introd., p. XI; also H. Musurillo, St. Methodius: The Symposium, a Treatise on Chastity (ACW 27 [Westminster, Md., 1958]), Introd., pp. 4-5.

[50] Bonwetsch, loc. cit.

[51] De viris inl. 83 (Richardson, p. 43). See Altaner, op. cit., p. 243.

[52] De viris inl. 87 and 89 (Richardson, p. 45).

II. Excellence of Virginity

In his *De virginitate servanda*, it was not Jerome's intention to compose "an encomium on virginity" (*laudes virginitatis*);[54] neither was it his purpose to treat of "the happiness of virginity" (*beatitudine virginitatis*) in glowing rhetorical terms that would appear to set the virgin among the angels and to place the world beneath her feet.[55] However, both in his *De virginitate servanda* and in later ascetical writings he clearly underscores the excellence of virginity by pointing to the divine source of the virginal life and by presenting the virgin as "the spouse of Christ."

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[53] *De viris inl*. 117 (Richardson, p. 52): "Liber, hexametro versu, *Virginitatis et Nuptiarum* contra se disserentium,"

[54] *Ep*. 22.2 (*CSEL* 54.145). O. Faller (S. Ambrosii, *De virginibus*, *FlP* 31 [1935], p. 4, note 4) calls attention to the fact that the *laudes* receive definitive form in the writings of Ambrose, who devotes the first of the three books of his *De virginibus* to this subject. For a literary treatment of virginity in the early centuries of Greek Christian literature, see M. R. Nugent, *Portrait of the Consecrated Woman in Greek Christian Literature of the First Four Centuries* (*CUPS* 64 [Washington, 1941]), especially Ch. 2, pp. 11-32: "The Praises of Virginity."

[55] *Ep*. 22.2 (*CSEL* 54.146).

1. Christ: The Author of Virginity

In his treatise *Adversus Iovinianum* Jerome briefly comments on St. Paul's teaching concerning "the new man." The Apostle urges the brethren of Colossae to "strip off the old man with his deeds and put on the new, one that is being renewed unto perfect knowledge according to the image of his Creator."[56] The "new man" is Christ.[57] Being a virgin Himself, Christ was born in eternity of a virgin Father and reborn in time through a virgin Mother.[58]

In his letter to Demetrias Jerome emphatically teaches that Christ is "the author and founder of virginity."[59] Echoing St. Paul, he declares that Christ represents the firstfruits of a harvest; after Him the rest of the harvest is to follow. Since Christ has risen as the firstfruits, He made us the promise of the full harvest--our resurrection. Moreover, Christ rose as a virgin; thus He dedicated to God in His own person the firstfruits of virginity, auguring for us the gift of a perfect virginal life at our own resurrection.[60]

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[56] Col. 3.9-10. See Gen. 3.28.

[57] See L. Cerfaux, *Christ in the Theology of St. Paul* (New York, 1959), p. 240.

[58] *Adv. Iovin*. 1.16 (*PL* 23.246): "Ubi diversitas sexus aufertur et veteri homine exuimur et induimur novo, ibi in Christum renascimur virginem, qui et natus ex virgine et renatus per virginem est." In this ascetical context the expression concerning Christ--*natus ex virgine*--seems to re-echo the doctrine of Gregory of Nyssa, who proclaims the transcendent pre-eminence of virginity by pointing out that in heaven it resides in the "incorrupt Father" and likewise in His Son, "the author of incorruption." See *De virginitate* 2 (ed. J. P. Cavarnos, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* 8.1), p. 253. In his poem περὶ παρθενίας 20 (*PG* 37.523), Gregory of Nazianzus calls the Blessed Trinity πρώτη παρθένος. Jerome refers to the poem in his *Adv. Iovin*. 1.13 (*PL* 23.241).

[59] *Ep*. 130.8 (*CSEL* 56.187): "Et [Christus] quasi auctor virginitatis et princeps."

Christ's own example throws into strong relief the excellence of virginity. He chose to be born of a virgin.[61] He desired virginity for Joseph on account of Mary, so that from a virginal wedlock a virgin son was born.[62] Christ also desired virginity for His precursor, John the Baptist. Thus the virgin Lord was proclaimed as the Messias and baptized in the Jordan by a virgin Prophet.[63] To John the Apostle Christ granted special privileges. Jerome associates him with Christ and Mary as one of the inaugurators of the virginal vocation. As the virgin writer John soars aloft and reaches the Father Himself saying: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the

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[60] Adv. Iovin. 1.39 (PL 23.278): "Et quomodo ipse primogenitus ex mortuis omnes in se mortuos suscitavit, sic ipse virgo primitias virginum suorum in se virgine dedicavit."

[61] Adv. Helvid. 19 (PL 23.213).

[62] Ibid.: "Etiam ipsum Ioseph virginem fuisse per Mariam, ut ex virginali coniugio virgo filius nasceretur."

[63] Adv. Iovin. 1.26 (PL 23.257).

Word was God." Thus the virgin Evangelist was given the vision to expound mysteries which are beyond the intelligence of the married. Finally, to emphasize the great privilege of John, or rather of virginity itself in John, Jerome admirably concludes: "To the virgin disciple the virgin Lord entrusted His own virgin Mother."[64] Rightly can Jerome proclaim Christ as "the herald of virginity."[65]

2. The Virgin: "Spouse of Christ"

At the very outset of his treatise *De virginitate servanda*, Jerome addresses Eustochium as "the spouse of my Lord," for she had adopted the virginal way of life since her childhood.[66] Throughout the treatise there are references to Christ as "the virgin's Spouse."[67]

Jerome goes so far as to declare that by her espousal to Christ, Eustochium had won a great honor for her mother; henceforth Paula has become "the mother-in-law of God" (*socrus Dei*).[68]

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[64] *Adv. Iovin.* 1.26 (*PL* 23.259).

[65] *Ibid.*, 1.19 (*PL* 23.248): "Virginitatis praeco Dominus."

[66] *Ep.* 22.2 (*CSEL* 54.145-146).

[67] *Ibid.*, 1 (*CSEL* 54.144); *ibid.*, 2 (*CSEL* 54.145); *ibid.*, 5 (*CSEL* 54.150); *ibid.*, 6 (*CSEL* 54.151); *passim.* Cf. *Ep.* 65.2 (*CSEL* 54.619).

[68] *Ep.* 22.20 (*CSEL* 54.170). Rufinus strongly criticized this concept, which is a bold extension of the concept of a virgin who becomes a bride of Christ. He accuses Jerome of blasphemy. See *Apologia contra Hieronymum* 2.13 (*CC* 22.93).

Writing to Laeta about the proper upbringing of her little daughter, Paulula, whom she had consecrated to Christ,[69] Jerome outlines an educational program for the young virgin. As soon as she grows older, she must increase "in wisdom, age and grace before God and men" in imitation of Christ, her bridegroom.[70] According to Jerome, therefore, the virgin is "the spouse of Christ"--sponsa Christi.

Addressing Eustochium, Jerome reminds her of the mystical nuptials between her and Christ. Christ, the King, desired her beauty, and she, "despising flesh" (carne contempta), joined her bridegroom's embrace. Jerome calls this union "the great sacrament" (illud magnum . . . sacramentum), comparing it to the nuptials between Christ and the Church. They two--Christ and the virgin--shall not be "of one flesh," but "of one spirit."[71]

When Jerome instructs Laeta on the proper education of her little daughter, he points out that Paulula as Christ's bride must dedicate her life entirely to His service. She will have to sacrifice the distractions of the world and even her friends and relatives. Accompanied by her parents she must go to the temple of her true

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[69] Ep. 107.3 (CSEL 55.293).

[70] Ibid., 7 (CSEL 55.298). See Luke 2.54.

[71] Ep. 22.1 (CSEL 54.143-145). See Eph. 5.32; 1 Cor. 6.17.

Father, but if her parents seek her upon the world's highway or amid crowds and relatives, they will find her nowhere except "in the sanctuary of the Scriptures, where she will question the prophets and the Apostles concerning her spiritual nuptials."[72]

The virgin "spurns the flesh," including carnal union, and chooses spiritual nuptials with Christ.[73] Henceforth the divine Bridegroom alone has the right to the undivided love and devotion of His spouse. There must be no compromise. This conviction Jerome voices in his letter to the virgin Demetrias: "Happy is the soul, happy is the virgin, in whose heart there is room for no other love than the love of Christ. Happy too is she who can recall a man without a sigh of regret, and who has no desire to see any man whom, after she has seen him, she might be unwilling to give up."[74] Christ is a jealous lover; He will not tolerate rivals.[75]

The bride of Christ is another Ark of the Covenant, most precious in the eyes of her divine Spouse. There was nothing in the Ark but the tablets of the covenant. The virgin too must be the custodian of the law of the Lord

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[72] Ep. 107.7 (CSEL 55.298): "In adyto scripturarum prophetas et apostolos de spiritalibus nuptiis sciscitantem."

[73] Ep. 22.1 (CSEL 54.144).

[74] Ep. 130.20 (CSEL 56.201).

[75] Ep. 22.25 (CSEL 54.180). See ibid., 24 (CSEL 54.177).

(custos legis Domini), who alone wishes to be enthroned in the virginal Ark as He alone sits above the cherubim.[76] Nothing defiled, nothing base must ever be allowed into the Ark, otherwise the Bridegroom will rise in anger and say to His spouse: "Your house shall be left to you desolate."[77] The virgin who becomes guilty of infidelity to her heavenly Bridegroom is branded by Jerome as an adulteress[78]--an adulteress not to a husband but to Christ Himself, as St. Cyprian had already declared.[79]

III. Jerome's Concept of Virginity

1. Definition of Virginity

Jerome defines virginity in concrete terms in his Adversus Helvidium: "A virgin is defined as one who is holy in body and in spirit."[80] This concept, of course, is Pauline[81] and expresses in a generic way the ideal of virginity: spiritual as well as corporal. Jerome phrases the same concept in different words, when he calls "that virgin a true sacrifice to Christ, whose soul has not been defiled by thought or her body by lust."[82]

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[76] Adv. Iovin. 1.12 (PL 23.239).

[77] Ep. 22.24 (CSEL 54.177). See Matt. 23.38.

[78] Ibid., 13 (CSEL 54.160).

[79] De habitu virginum 20 (CSEL 3.1.203): "Non mariti sed Christi adulterae."

[80] Adv. Helvid. 20 (PL 23.214): "Virginis definitio: sanctam esse corpore et spiritu." See Adv. Iovin. 1.12 (PL 23.239).

[81] 1 Cor. 7.34.

2. Spiritual Castration

Both in the Adversus Iovinianum and in the Commentary on Matthew, Jerome briefly explains Christ's logion in Matt. 19.10-12. There are three classes of eunuchs, he points out.[83] The first two include eunuchs of the flesh, that is, those who become eunuchs by necessity, either because of birth or because of the violence of man.[84] The third kind consists of eunuchs of the spirit, that is, of those who renounce the condition of their birth for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.[85] The spiritual eunuch offers himself entirely as a perfect burnt-offering to God; he freely surrenders himself to the Lord.[86] That very surrender and offering renders him a eunuch--one "unfit for the married life."[87]

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[82] Adv. Iovin. 1.13 (PL 23.242): "Sed illa virginitas hostia Christi est, cuius nec mentem cogitatio nec carnem libido maculavit."

[83] Comm. in Matt. 19.12 (PL 26.140-141).

[84] Adv. Iovin. 1.12 (PL 23.239): "Alios eunuchos natura facit, alios vis hominum." For Jerome's examples see Comm. in Matt. 19.12 (PL 26.140-141).

[85] Adv. Iovin. 1.12 (PL 23.239): "Noluerunt esse quod nati sunt."

[86] Ibid. See note 93 below.

The kingdom of heaven is presented as "the overpowering gift of God."[88] The celibacy Christ speaks of is not simply a voluntary renunciation of marriage, nor even an heroic offering of the individual, but rather the necessary result of a total dedication to the kingdom of heaven.[89] This kind of dedication means "to live and work for the kingdom of God."[90]

Not everyone is capable of such a total dedication. Christ Himself declares: "Not every one can master this lesson, but only such as have received a special gift."[91] Perfect chastity is a matter of grace and prayer. It is granted to those who pray for it, who will it, and who strive for it.[92] The very reason why Christ loves the celibates more is that of their own free will they make an offering of what was not commanded them.[93]

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[87] J. Blinzler, " Εἰσὶν εὐνοῦχοι --Zur Auslegung von Mt 19.12," ZNTW 28 (1957), 257.

[88] Ibid., p. 262.

[89] Ibid., p. 264.

[90] Ibid., p. 267.

[91] Matt. 19.11. The translation is by J. A. Kleist; see his article "Eunuchs in the New Testament," CBQ 7 (1945), 448.

[92] Comm. in Matt. 19.11 (PL 26.140): "His datum est qui petierunt, qui voluerunt, qui ut acciperent, laboraverunt."

3. Loss of Virginity

Time and again Jerome insists on "virginity in spirit" (virginitas spiritu). This means that the virgin must keep herself free not only from carnal contamination, but also from every kind of sin. In fact, corporal integrity has little value, if it is not accompanied by holiness of life. Jerome states his point succinctly: "It is of no benefit to have virginal flesh, if one is wedded in his heart."[94] Recalling Christ's teaching: "Anyone who so much as looks with lust at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart," Jerome concludes: "Virginity, therefore, may be lost even by thinking."[95]

On the loss of virginity Jerome makes the bold assertion: "Although God can do all things, He cannot raise up a virgin after she has fallen." In other words, He cannot restore a virginity that has been lost.[96] Of course God has power to free a virgin from the penalty she incurred, but He has no power to crown her who has lost her virginity. Quoting the words of Amos: "And good virgins shall faint," Jerome warns his disciples ever to bear this prophecy in mind, so that God may never say to anyone of them: "The virgin of Israel has fallen; there is no one to raise her up."[97]

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[93] Adv. Iovin. 1.12 (PL 23.238): "Et ideo plus amat virgines Christus, quia sponte tribuunt, quod sibi non fuerat imperatum." See Comm. in Esaiam 56.4-5 (CC 73A.633): "Iste [eunuchus] elegit quae Dominus voluit, ut plus afferat quam praeceptum est."

[94] Adv. Helvid. 20 (PL 23.214): "Nihil prosit carnem habere virginem, si mente quis nupserit." See Adv. Iovin. 1.34 (PL 23.269): "Dum sibi [virgo] applaudit de sola corporis castitate, virtutes caeteras negligit."

[95] Ep. 22.5 (CSEL 54.150): "Perit et mente virginitas." See Matt. 5.28.

[96] Ibid.: "Audenter loquor: cum omnia Deus possit, suscitare virginem non potest post ruinam."

IV. Virginity and Chastity

1. Gift of God

As previously stated,[98] not everyone is capable of a total dedication to the kingdom of heaven; it is a special gift of God. Jerome adopts Christ's own clear declaration: "Not everyone can master this lesson, but only such as have received a special gift."[99] From this utterance, Jerome explains, it is obvious why St. Paul had no "commandment of the Lord" (*praeceptum Domini*)--no traditional teaching of the Lord on this subject to pass on to the Corinthians.[100] Christ is the ἀγωνοθέτης; He holds in His hand the prize of virginity (*virginitatis bravium*), and pointing to the fountain of purity (*purissimum fontem*), He cries out: "If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink. Let him accept it who can."[101]

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[97] *Ibid*. See Amos 5.2 and 8.13.

[98] See p. 102.

[99] *Adv*. *Iovin*. 1.12 (*PL* 23.238). See also note 91 above.

[100] *Adv*. *Iovin*. 1.12 (*PL* 23.238). See 1 Cor. 7.25.

Commenting on St. Paul's longing for universal celibacy, Jerome represents the Apostle addressing the Corinthians: "This is my wish, this my desire, that you be imitators of me, as I am of Christ--Christ a virgin born of a virgin, uncorrupt from her who was uncorrupt. I would that all men were like me, so that resembling me, they may resemble Christ, Whom I resemble." And Jerome exclaims: "Happy the man who becomes like Paul!"[102]

The Apostle admits however, as Jerome remarks, that in the Church there is diversity of gifts.[103] Among these gifts is celibacy.[104] It is therefore the object of grace--χάρισμα, that is, a special gift of God.[105]

2. Free Gift to God

Jerome asserts the Pauline doctrine that the soul of the Christian is a true temple of the living God.[106] But this is especially true of the virgin: she is "the hospice of the Trinity";[107] she is "the true temple of God and the Holy of Holies," for she is consecrated to the Lord by pure virginity.[108] The virgin offers herself entirely to the Lord as a holocaust. This offering and consecration is the effect of her great faith and virtue.[109] Commenting on the words of Psalm 95.8: "Bring victims, and enter His courts," Jerome tells his monks what these victims should be. "These victims are you yourselves, for virginity is a holocaust to Christ."[110] And he continues: "All chastity, whether in virginity, in widowhood, or in continence, is a sacrificial offering to Christ."[111] Every virgin constitutes "a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God."[112] This is the only sacrifice that the Lord wants.[113] The soul of the virgin Demetrias is an altar upon which Jerome is ready to offer to Eternal Purity a living victim, free from all stain and wholly pleasing to God.[114]

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[101] *Ibid*. See John 7.37 and Matt. 19.12.

[102] *Adv*. *Iovin*. 1.8 (*PL* 23.232).

[103] *Ibid*.: "In Ecclesia diversa sunt dona."

[104] *Ibid*.: "Simulque considera, quod aliud donum virginitatis sit, aliud nuptiarum."

[105] See A. Robertson and A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (2 ed., Edinburgh, 1914), p. 136.

[106] E.g., *Adv*. *Iovin*. 1.10 (*PL* 23.234). See 2 Cor. 6.16.

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[107] See _Ep_. 22.6 (_CSEL_ 54.151): "Post Trinitatis hospitium."

[108] _Adv_. _Iovin_. 1.33 (_PL_ 23.267).

[109] _Ibid_., 1.12 (_PL_ 23.239): "Grandis fidei est grandisque virtutis . . . totum se holocaustum offerre Domino."

[110] _Tract_. _de_ _Ps_. 95 (_CC_ 78.153): "Vos ipsi estote hostiae. Virginitas holocaustum Christi est."

[111] _Ibid_.: "Universa castitas, sive in virginitate sive in viduitate sive in continentia, hostia Christi est."

[112] _Rom_. 12.1. See _Ep_. 66.12 (_CSEL_ 54.662).

[113] _Ep_. 118.5 (_CSEL_ 55.441-442).

Though deeply aware of the excellence of a life of perpetual chastity, Jerome fully realizes that such a life is "an exceptionally heavy burden" (onus gravissimum castitatis).[115] "It is a difficult task," he writes to Jovinian,[116] echoing the sentiment he had already expressed to Eustochium: "Grandis labor, sed grande praemium."[117] He vigorously insists that the life of virginity is not a precept but a counsel. Knowing the weakness of the vessel which He had made, that is, knowing our weak human nature, the Creator left virginity to our choice. We must not be surprised, adds Jerome, "if in the midst of the temptations of the flesh and the incentives to vice, the angelic life (angelorum vitam) is not demanded of us, but recommended to us."[118]

This teaching Jerome had already given to his disciples in Rome. Commenting on the words of St. Paul (1 Cor. 7.25): "Concerning virgins I have no commandment of the

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[114] Ep. 130.2 (CSEL 56.176): "Et hostiam vivam, placentem Deo ac sine ulla macula aeternae pudicitiae consecrarem."

[115] Adv. Iovin. 1.13 (PL 23.242).

[116] Ibid., 1.12 (PL 23.239).

[117] Ep. 22.38 (CSEL 54.204).

[118] Adv. Iovin. 1.12 (PL 23.237-238).

Lord," he writes to Eustochium: "That is of greater value which is not demanded but freely offered." If virginity were commanded, it would appear that the Apostle was rejecting matrimony, which had been established by God, and was compelling men to live angelic lives--something that is opposed to their very nature.[119]

Jerome emphasizes Our Lord's great love for those who become celibates for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He declares: "Therefore Christ loves virgins more than others, because they willingly give what was not commanded them."[120] In turn Christ willingly takes such generous souls into His own bosom. To support his position Jerome pictures Christ as the referee of the ascetic contest which the Christian athletes are about to enter. Christ puts up the reward, and inviting contestants to run, He holds in His hand the prize of virginity. He does not say you must run, whether you are willing or not, but: Whoever is willing and able may run and win the victory.[121]

3. Life of Heaven

Jerome reminds the virgin Eustochium that her group belongs in heaven.[122] His remark about Paul the Hermit that he lived "the life of heaven on earth" (vitam caelestem in terris),[123] can be applied to every perfect ascetic. Virginity is a heavenly perfection, an anticipation for those who embrace it of what will be the final destiny of all in the kingdom of heaven. This doctrine Jerome derives from the words of Christ to the Sadducees: "At the resurrection of the dead, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage, but will be like the angels."[124] In his epitaphium Paulae he comments on Christ's utterance: "What the Lord promises to us is not the nature of angels but their mode of life and their bliss. All God's holy men and virgins manifest in themselves even in this world the life of angels."[125] To Jovinian Jerome writes: "Virgins have begun to be on earth what others will begin to be in heaven."[126] And he encourages Eustochium: "Rejoice, my virgin: you have begun to be in truth what other women pretend to be."[127] Of this truth St. Cyprian also reminds the virgins of Carthage: "What we shall be, you have already begun to be."[128] In the world to come all are virgins. Those on earth who remain celibate "in view of the kingdom of heaven" already belong to the virginal retinue of the Lamb, their heavenly King.[129]

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[119] Ep. 22.20 (CSEL 54.171).

[120] Adv. Iovin. 1.12 (PL 23.238).

[121] Ibid. (PL 23.238-239).

[122] Ep. 22.19 (CSEL 54.168): "Tuum agmen in caelis est."

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[123] Vita Pauli 7 (PL 23.22).

[124] Adv. Iovin. 1.36 (PL 23.273). See Matt. 22.30; Mark 12.25; Luke 20.36.

[125] Ep. 108.23 (CSEL 55.341).

[126] Adv. Iovin. 1.36 (PL 23.273).

[127] Ep. 22.38 (CSEL 54.205): "Gaude, mi virgo: quod aliae simulant, tu vere esse coepisti."

[128] De habitu virginum 22 (CSEL 3.1.203): "Quod futuri sumus, iam vos esse coepistis."

V. Virginity Superior to Marriage

1. Superior Gift

Jerome is aware that in the Church there is a variety of gifts of God.[130] With regard to virginity he holds that it is a special gift of God, but a gift not granted to all.[131] Marriage too is a gift, but far different from the gift of virginity.[132] It is something good, but it is good only in comparison with something evil, namely, sins of the flesh. But virginity, by contrast, is something good in itself (bonum naturaliter), good without qualification.[133] This teaching Jerome presents as based on the teaching of St. Paul himself, whose voice may be regarded as the voice of Christ.[134]

And yet Jerome's position with regard to marriage should not be exaggerated. Indeed, whatever praise Jovinian bestows on wedlock Jerome gladly accepts as his own.[135] His reason is clear and simple: "The Church does not condemn marriage, but subordinates it to virginity."[136] Only the heretics make it their aim to condemn marriage and despise the command of God.[137] However, in such contexts Jerome immediately proclaims his preference for virginity. Thus to Eustochium he writes: "I praise marriage, I praise wedlock"; but he adds at once: "But I do so, because they produce virgins for me. . . . Marriage is honored the more when the fruit of the union is more loved."[138] This same thought he repeats with full clarity at the very outset of his Adversus Iovinianum: "While honoring marriage, we prefer virginity, which is the offspring of marriage."[139]

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[129] See C. Cervaux and J. Cambier, L'Apocalypse de saint Jean lue aux chrétiens (Paris, 1955), pp. 124-125.

[130] Adv. Iovin. 1.8 (PL 23.232): "In Ecclesia diversa sunt dona." Ibid.: "Diversa sunt dona Christi."

[131] See p. 102 above.

[132] Adv. Iovin. 1.8 (PL 23.232).

[133] Ibid., 1.7 (PL 23.229).

[134] Ibid., 1.6 (PL 23.228).

In comparing the two states of life, Jerome employs many images:[140] Virginity is a rose from thorns, gold from the earth, pearl from the shell,[141] fruit from the tree, grain from the stalk.[142]

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[135] Adv. Iovin. 1.40 (PL 23.282).

[136] Ibid.: "Ecclesia enim matrimonia non damnat, sed subjicit."

[137] Ibid. In the introduction to the treatise Jerome singles out three heretics: Marcion, Manichaeus and Tatian, whom, because of his notoriety, he styles "the leader of the Encratites." See G. Blond, "Encratisme," DSp 4.639.

[138] Ep. 22.20 (CSEL 54.170).

[139] Adv. Iovin. 1.3 (PL 23.223): "Ita nuptias recipimus, ut virginitatem, quae de nuptiis nascitur, praeferamus."

[140] For symbols representing virginity in the early Greek Fathers, see Nugent, op. cit., pp. 90-91.

2. Hundredfold Harvest

Commenting on the Parable of the Seed, whose fertility varies with the soil on which it is sowed, Jerome considers virginity as the seed that produces the hundredfold harvest. To continent widowhood he accords the sixtyfold and to chaste marriage the thirtyfold.[143] This exegesis he first proposes in the Adversus Iovinianum. He comments as follows: Though the hundredfold, the sixtyfold, and the thirtyfold come from the earth from a single sowing, yet there is a great difference in the matter of number. The thirtyfold refers to marriage; sixtyfold applies to widows; the number one hundred indicates the crown of virginity (virginitatis coronam).[144] As spiritual director at Rome he had already instructed Eustochium that the hundredfold and the sixtyfold harvest--that is, virginity and widowhood--spring from the same seed of chastity.[145] Thus, according to Jerome, there are three degrees of the virtue of chastity: chaste marriage, widowhood, and virginity.[146] Though he does not consider them of equal merit, he asserts nevertheless that each degree is "a sacrificial offering to Christ."[147]

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[141] Ep. 22.20 (CSEL 54.170).

[142] Adv. Iovin. 1.3 (PL 23.223).

[143] Comm. in Matt. 13.23 (PL 26.92): "Centesimum fructum virginibus, sexagesimum viduis et continentibus, tricesimum casto matrimonio deputantes."

[144] Adv. Iovin. 1.3 (PL 23.223-224). Jerome repeats this explanation in his letter to Geruchia (Ep. 123.8, CSEL 56.82).

[145] Ep. 22.15 (CSEL 54.163): "Centesimus et sexagesimus fructus de uno sunt semine castitatis." Ibid., 19 (CSEL 54.168): "Meum semen centena fruge fecundum est."

3. Paradise of Virginity

Jerome is firmly convinced that Adam and Eve were created virgins and remained virgins until they were exiled from paradise. This conviction he clearly expresses in his treatise against Jovinian. He writes: "As to Adam and Eve, we must say that before the fall they were virgins in paradise, and after their sin they immediately married outside paradise."[148] In his explanation of Genesis 4.1, Jerome infers that while in paradise Adam and Eve had remained in perpetual virginity up till the time of their fall.[149] Thus from the earliest days of mankind, virginity was sanctified by paradise.[150] Elsewhere Jerome makes reference to "the paradise of virginity" (paradisus virginitatis).[151] According to him, therefore, paradise is the true fatherland of virginity,[152] and marriage, which had no place in this paradise, becomes greatly inferior to virginity.

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[146] See Ep. 22.13: "Quamquam [Blesilla] secundum pudicitiae gradum teneat." Also Ep. 123.10 (CSEL 56.83).

[147] See note 111 above.

[148] Adv. Iovin. 1.16 (PL 23.246): "Ac de Adam quidem et Eva illud dicendum, quod ante offensam in paradiso virgines fuerint; post peccatum autem et extra paradisum protinus nuptiae."

[149] Ibid., 1.29 (PL 23.263); Ep. 22.19 (CSEL 54.169); "Eva in paradiso virgo fuit; post pellicias tunicas initium nuptiarum." This doctrine is common to most of the Fathers of the early Church. See D. Dunn, The Theological Basis of Virginity according to St. Jerome (Latrobe, 1961), p. 5.

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[150] Adv. Iovin. 1.29 (PL 23.263): "Statim a principio conditionis humanae virginitatem paradisus et terra nuptias dedicaverit."

[151] Ep. 22.18 (CSEL 54.167); Ep. 128.3 (CSEL 56.158).

[152] See e.g., Ep. 22.18 (CSEL 54.169): "Tua regio paradisus."

CHAPTER IV

THE WORKS OF THE PERFECT ASCETIC

A. Mortification

The fundamental ascetic doctrine of Jesus Christ is summed up in the forceful exhortation to self-denial and mortification: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."[1] On two separate occasions Jesus formulated for his disciples the all-embracing claims of the cross.[2] This is the ultimate foundation of Christian asceticism, the ultimate basis of the law of mortification.

Before beginning His active apostolate, Jesus observed an absolute fast of forty days and forty nights.[3] In this number Jerome sees a mystery: "In isto numero quadragesimae nobis ostenditur sacramentum, in quo et Moyses ieiunavit in monte Sina et Elias iuxta montem Horeb."[4] Christ had no need of doing penance on His own account; He was fulfilling what had been prefigured in Moses and Elias--both of whom had used fasting and prayer as a preparation for receiving a revelation from God.[5]

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[1] M. Viller and M. Olphe-Galliard, "L'ascèse dans le Nouveau Testament," DSp 1.962: "La doctrine ascétique fondamentale du Nouveau Testament . . . peut se résumer en cette seule parole de Notre Seigneur: 'Si quelqu'on veut venir après moi. . . .'"

[2] Matt. 10.38 and Matt. 16.24. Cf. Luke 9.23; Mark 8.34.

[3] Matt. 4.2; Mark 1.13. Luke (4.2) explicitly states that "in those days he [Christ] ate nothing." Drinking water would not be considered as breaking this fast. See H. Musurillo, "The Problem of Ascetical Fasting in the Greek Patristic Writers," p. 45, note 14.

Furthermore, Jerome observes that Christ espoused the Church, and from this holy and spiritual union the Apostles were the offspring.[6] To them Christ was the ever-present Bridegroom, by Whom the kingdom of God had been brought into their midst;[7] so why should they give themselves up to the practice of penance? When the Pharisees complained that His disciples did not fast, Jesus refuted them; "Can you make the wedding guests fast as long as the bridegroom is with them?"[8] As long as they had the Bridegroom with them, they could not be expected to fast.[9] Jesus did not condemn fasting. He approves of it, but He postpones it for His disciples until His passion and resurrection.[10]

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[4] Comm. in Matt. 4.2 (PL 26.32).

[5] Cf. Ex. 34.28; Deut. 9.9-11; 3 Kings 19.8.

[6] Comm. in Matt. 9.15 (PL 26.58): "Sponsus Christus; sponsa Ecclesia est. De hoc sancto spiritualique connubio apostoli sunt procreati."

[7] See Luke 17.21.

[8] Luke 5.29.

[9] Comm. in Matt. 9.15 (PL 26.58): "Qui [Apostoli] lugere non possunt quandiu sponsam in thalamo vident, et sciunt sponsum esse cum sponsa."

Jerome asserts that Christ often proclaimed the doctrine of self-denial and mortification.[11] He also frequently addressed the same exhortation to his disciples. He rejoices that on a desolate island Bonosus was bearing his cross;[12] he recalls that in time of danger Paula drew strength from Christ's exhortation;[13] he reflects how by her life of continuous mortification Marcella became a true disciple of Christ.[14]

Writing to Algasia,[15] Jerome quotes the comment he himself had previously made in his Commentary on Matthew concerning Christ's exhortation to self-denial and mortification.[16] Then he adds a further explanation, in which he voices the teaching of St. Paul. According to the Apostle the work of the Christian consists in the constant mortification of the flesh and in stripping himself more and more completely of the old man. Jerome repeats this Pauline doctrine: "He who puts off the old man with his deeds[17] denies himself and can say with St. Paul: 'It is now no longer I that live but Christ lives in me.'"[18] Such a one is crucified to the world, and thus becomes a follower of the crucified Lord.[19]

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[10] Ibid.: "Quando vero transierint nuptiae et passionis ac resurrectionis tempus advenerit, tunc sponsi filii ieiunabunt." See Mark 2.20; Luke 5.35.

[11] Ep. 14.6 (CSEL 54.53-54): "Vociferatur ille [Christus] saepe: 'Si quis vult post me venire, abneget se ipsum et tollat crucem suam et sequatur me.'"

[12] Ep. 3.4 (CSEL 54.15): "Bonosus tuus portat crucem suam."

[13] Ep. 108.19 (CSEL 55.332).

[14] Ep. 127.6 (CSEL 56.150).

[15] Ep. 121.3 (CSEL 56.13).

[16] Comm. in Matt. 16.24-26 (PL 26.124).

In his "cultural historical study" (kulturgeschichtlichen Studie), Ernst Bickel endeavors to answer the question wherein lies--with regard to the ascetical ideal--"the common ground" (das Gemeinsame) of the three great teachers of the Church: Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine.[20] In Bickel's theory, the system of asceticism formed in the Church under their influence was the result of three separate streams: (1) the ascetic ideal of the Gospel, taught by Jesus and developed by St. Paul;[21] (2) a sort of monastic-gnostic asceticism, based on the use of corporal penance for the attainment of the beatific vision;[22] and (3) the asceticism of ancient philosophy.[23] These three streams blend into the ascetical ideal of the three great Western Fathers of the Church.[24]

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[17] See Col. 3.9.

[18] Gal. 2.20.

[19] *Ep*. 121.3 (*CSEL* 56.13-15): "Cui autem mundus crucifixus est, sequitur Dominum crucifixum." See *ibid*.: "Idcirco enim Dominus crucifixus est, ut et nos . . . crucifigamur cum ipso dicamusque, quod Paulus apostolus docuit: 'Cum Christo crucifixus sum.'"

[20] "Das asketische Ideal bei Ambrosius, Hieronymus und Augustin," *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum* 37 (1916), 437-474.

[21] *Ibid*., pp. 437-441.

Such a method of speculative categorization arouses suspicion. It has the appearance of a simple and lucid scheme, but its foundation does not seem to be solidly guaranteed. Bickel, for example, wants to establish the ascetic ideal of the Gospel, but does not even take into account the basic ascetic demand made by Christ: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me (Matt. 16.24)." And yet Christ's demand is unmistakably voiced in the New Testament and widely proclaimed in the writings of the Fathers. To present an approximate picture of the ascetic ideal of an Ambrose, a Jerome or an Augustine, it is not sufficient to pick a few expressions out of their writings and incorporate them in the perspective of an ideal scheme.[25]

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[22] Ibid., pp. 441-448.

[23] Ibid., pp. 448-455.

[24] See ibid., p. 455: "In dem asketischen Ideal der okzidentalen doctores ecclesiae . . . fliessen die drei Strömungen der evangelischen, mönchisch-gnostischen und philosophischen Askese zusammen."

[25] See the review of Bickel's article by J. Stiglmayr in Theologische Revue 16 (1917), 403-406.

Bickel's schematization, Musurillo points out, would seem to be based on "an intuitive approach," and it can only be refuted by showing how diverse is the material on which our judgment must be based.[26] This approach, which may be called "phenomenological," has been attempted by H. Strathmann and P. Keseling,[27] and in particular by Arbesmann[28] and Musurillo;[29] only such an approach can remedy the defects of Bickel's generalization.

I. Sackcloth (*Saccus*)[30]

We learn from Jerome that his Roman disciples were accustomed to wear sackcloth--a coarse outer garment made of goat's hair.[31] The ascetic who wished to give himself up entirely to Christ donned this penitential garb to show his contempt for the world. "Let our coarse tunic prove that you despise the world," Jerome tells Rusticus.[32] By her very dress Asella proclaimed to her relatives that she had already cut herself off from the world.[33] Fabiola's slave garb was a sign of her condemnation of the silken dresses she used to wear during her married life;[34] Paula and Melanium wished "to appear beautiful in sackcloth and ashes."[35] Other ascetics of that time used the same rough garment: Bonosus on the deserted island,[36] Hilarion in the desert of Syria,[37] Pammachius in the senate of Rome.[38] Jerome himself wore sackcloth ever since he began his ascetic life in the desert of Chalcis.[39]

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[26] See Musurillo, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

[27] "Askese II (christlich)," *RAC* 1 (1950), 758-795.

[28] R. Arbesmann, "Fasting and Prophecy in Pagan and Christian Antiquity," *Traditio* 7 (1949/1951), 1-71.

[29] See note 27 above.

[30] See L. Gougaud, "Cilice," *DSp* 1.899-900; A. Hermann, "Cilicium," *RAC* 3.127-134; Daremberg-Saglio, "Cilicium," 1.10.1172. Our "sackcloth" gives a wrong idea of σάκκος, which was made of the hair of goats and other animals, and was used for clothing. But sacks were made of it (Genesis 42.25; Josue 9.4) as well as garments.

[31] Lea (*Ep.* 23.2, *CSEL* 54.212); Asella (*Ep.* 24.4, *CSEL* 54.216); Paula and Melanium (*Ep.* 45.4, *CSEL* 54.326); Fabiola (*Ep.* 77.4, *CSEL* 55.40).

To Jerome and his disciples sackcloth was a sign of prayer and fasting[40] as well as a weapon of penance.[41] But of the two penances: fasting, which passes unnoticed, and sackcloth, which can become a source of pride, Jerome readily gives the preference to fasting.[42]

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[32] Ep. 125.7 (CSEL 56.124).

[33] Ep. 24.4 (CSEL 54.215-216): "Tunicam fusciorem induta ut intellegeret universa cognatio iam saeculum damnasset in vestibus."

[34] Ep. 77.2 (CSEL 55.38): "Dicam in condemnationem vestium sericarum plebeium cultum et servilia indumenta quaesita?"

[35] Ep. 45.4 (CSEL 54.326): "Nunc in sacco et cinere formonsae volunt videri."

[36] Ep. 3.4 (CSEL 54.16): "Horrent sacco membra deformi."

[37] Vita Hilarionis 4 (PL 23.31): "Sacco tantum membra coopertus."

[38] Ep. 66.6 (CSEL 54.654): "Quis hoc crederet, ut consulum pronepos . . . inter purpuras senatorum furva tunica pullatus incederet?"

[39] Ep. 22.7 (CSEL 54.153): "Horrebam sacco membra deformis."

II. Hairshirt

One of the instruments of penance used by Jerome's disciples was the hairshirt--*cilicium*[43]--a rough undergarment worn next to the skin.[44] While Nepotianus was still a soldier at court, beneath his military cloak and white linen tunic he wore a hairshirt which chafed his body.[45] The example of such a penitential garment Jerome derives from Elias, the prophet of Israel, and from John the Baptist, the precursor of Christ; for they, he claims, mortified themselves by wearing girdles made of skin animals.[46] Jerome points out how the ancient prophets were accustomed to put on the hairshirt whenever they exhorted the people of Israel to penance.[47] Moreover, in one of his homilies addressed to the monks of Bethlehem, he quotes the example of King Achab, who, after being reproved by Elias for his crimes, began to fast and to wear haircloth under his royal attire. For these acts of penance God promised not to bring evil upon the king during his reign.[48] Jerome concludes: "Just realize the power of haircloth and of fasting, and how much blood is washed away by humble tears!"[49]

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[40] *Ep*. 44.1 (*CSEL* 54.322): "Saccus orationis signum atque ieiunii est."

[41] *Comm*. *in* *Ionam* 3.5 (*SChr* 43.95): "Saccus et ieiunium arma sunt paenitentiae."

[42] *Ibid*.: "Et si e duobus necessariis unum est subtrahendum, magis ieiunium absque sacco quam saccum eligam absque ieiunio."

[43] See L. Gougaud, "Cilice," *DSp* 1.899-900; A. Hermann, "Cilicium," *RAC* 3.127-134.

[44] Paula *Ep*. 108.15 (*CSEL* 56.326): "Mollia linteamina et serica pretiosissima asperitate cilicii conmutanda"; Demetrias may have used it on occasions (*Ep*. 130.4, *CSEL* 56.178): "Appetisse eam . . . asperitatem vestium."

[45] *Ep*. 60.9 (*CSEL* 54.558).

There seems to be no indication that Jerome ever prescribed this form of penance for his disciples; however we do know that he praised and encouraged it. Commenting on the words of the Psalmist: "induebam me cilicio"

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[46] Ep. 130.4 (CSEL 56.178): "Stupebat ad conversationem Heliae et Iohannis Baptistae, quorum uterque zona pellicia adstrinxit et mortificavit lumbos suos," Also Ep. 125.7 (CSEL 56.125) and Ep. 38.3 (CSEL 54.291).

[47] Comm. in Zach. 13.3-6 (PL 25.1593): "Hic enim erat habitus prophetarum, ut quando populum ad paenitentiam provocabant, induerentur cilicio."

[48] 3 Kings 21.27-29.

[49] Tract. de Ps. 140 (CC 78.307): "Vide ergo quantum valuit cilicium et ieiunium, et modica lacrima quantum sanguinem lavit."

(Ps. 34.13), he exclaims: "These are the weapons of the saints!"[50] There was one occasion, however, when he sternly recommended the use of the haircloth: that was in the case of Sabinianus, a deacon, whom he warned to repent and "to put on sackcloth for a little while," reminding him how Achab had humbled himself before God.[51]

III. *Chameunia*[52]

Another penance practiced by ascetics was the *chameunia*, that is, sleeping on the ground.[53] Several of Jerome's disciples faithfully performed this penance. Asella adopted it without suffering any ill effects in her body.[54] Paula loved penance so heroically that even in time of sickness she gave up her ordinary bed and rested on the hard ground covered only with mats of goat's hair.[55] Refusing sheets of linen and down beds, young

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[50] *Commentarioli in Psalmos*, Ps. 39 (*CC* 72.205): "Haec sunt arma sanctorum."

[51] *Ep*. 147.9 (*CSEL* 56.326): "Mittitur tibi Helias tormenta et interitum nuntians: incurvare et sacco vestire paulisper."

[52] *Chameunia* (χαμευνία) = sleeping on the bare ground (*humi dormitio*). This explanation occurs in Jerome's *Commentary on Aggai* 1.11 (*PL* 25.1466), but Martianay considers it a gloss.

[53] *Tract*. *de Ps*. 106 (*CC* 78.199-200): "Multis generibus tibi servit caro mea: in ieiuniis, in chameuniis, in tribulatione, in angustiis, in fame, in siti, in frigore."

[54] *Ep*. 24.4 (*CSEL* 54.216): "Non sicca humus iacentia membra confringeret."

[55] *Ep*. 108.15 (*CSEL* 55.326).

Demetrias slept upon the ground.[56] In all the three cases mentioned here the ascetics slept on *ciliciola*, namely, on mats spread out on the ground.[57] These were symbols of penance. To the Spanish couple of Baetica, Lucinius and his wife Theodora, Jerome sent some gifts from Bethlehem, among them four rugs of goat's hair, which, he told them, were "symbols of daily penance."[58]

In his letter to Heliodorus Jerome clearly implies that in the desert of Chalcis he and other solitaries slept on the bare ground.[59] Writing to Nepotianus he regretfully points out that an ascetic in his advanced years can no longer carry out this practice regularly because of bodily weakness.[60]

IV. Abstinence

At Rome Jovinian preached the doctrine that ascetical practices with regard to food and drink were a sinful rejection of God's creatures, for all things were created for the use of mortal man.[61] This doctrine he attempted to prove from Sacred Scripture stating that all living creatures, together with herbs and vegetables, were given to man for food.[62] Furthermore, he also quoted St. Paul: "All things are clean to the clean, and nothing is to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving."[63]

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[56] *Ep*. 130.4 (*CSEL* 56.179): "Sed ciliciolum in nuda humo habuisse pro stratu."

[57] See Hermann, "Cilicium," *RAC* 3.133: "Man verwendet es, bewusst asketisch, als Schlafmatte." Gougaud (*DSp* 1.899) lists three Hieronymian texts as referring to *cilicium*; however in two of these Jerome speaks of *ciliciola*, rather than of hairshirts. See also Antin, "Le cilice chez saint Jérôme," *La Vie spirituelle*, Suppl. 1 (1947), 58.

[58] *Ep*. 71.2 (*CSEL* 55.7): "Ego insignia paupertatis et cotidianae symbola paenitentiae tibi et sorori misi, quattuor ciliciola apta proposito et usibus vestris."

[59] *Ep*. 14.10 (*CSEL* 54.60): "Super nudam metuis humum exesa ieiuniis membra conlidere? Sed dominus tecum iacet."

[60] *Ep*. 52.3 (*CSEL* 54.416): "Ieiunia, chameunia. . . fracto corpore minora fiunt."

In his polemic against Jovinian, Jerome emphatically spurns the charge and defends the Pauline principle that all God's creatures are good. No ascetic, no Christian, joins with Marcion or with Tatian or with other heretics in condemning and despising the works of the Creator.[64] Jerome writes: "We praise every creature of God, and yet prefer leanness to corpulence, abstinence to luxury, fasting to fullness."[65]

The particular things from which Jerome's disciples had to abstain were the following: wine, meat, delicate food, and worldly companionship.

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[61] _Adv_. _Iovin_. 2.5 (_PL_ 23.303).

[62] _Ibid_.

[63] _Ibid_. (_PL_ 23.394). See Rom. 14.20; 1 Tim. 4.3-4.

[64] _Ibid_., 2.16 (_PL_ 23.323): "Sed [Paulus] et Marcionem designat et Tatianum et caeteros haereticos, qui abstinentiam indicunt perpetuam, ad destruenda et contemnenda et abominanda opera Creatoris."

[65] _Ibid_.: "Nos autem creaturam omnem laudamus Dei, et maciem saginae, abstinentiam luxuriae, ieiunia praeferimus saturitati."

1. Wine

The Romans of Jerome's time were accustomed to drink wine mixed with water in various proportions.[66] One of the favorite drinks was wine flavored with honey--mulsum. Jerome mentions it in his letter to Asella and in his polemic against Jovinian.[67] Spiced wine (conditum vinum) was also considered a luxury.[68]

As a rule, wine was the ordinary, daily beverage. In his letters Jerome mentions all types of persons who drank wine: children, young men, virgins, widows, clergy, and old men and women. It was found even on the tables of bishops.[69] In place of wine cider was used or fermented liquors made from fruit juices.[70]

Concerning the use of wine Jerome lays down this rule for his disciples: "The spouse of Christ must avoid wine as she would avoid poison."[71] This is the rule Laeta must adopt in the upbringing of her little daughter Paula. "Let her learn even now not to drink wine 'wherein is debauchery.'"[72] He often repeats the words of St. Paul: "It is good for man not to drink wine and not to eat meat."[73]

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[66] Ep. 22.40 (CSEL 54.208): "Cum aquatius bibimus, calix frangitur, mensa subvertitur, verbera sonant."

[67] Ep. 45.5 (CSEL 54.327): "Te delibuta vina delectant"; Adv. Iovin. 1.40 (PL 23.280); ibid., 2.8 (PL 23.311).

[68] Ep. 22.9 (CSEL 54.156). It was a mixture of wine, honey and pepper. See Daremberg-Saglio 5.921.

[69] Adv. Iovin. 1.35 (PL 23.270): "Sic bibat episcopus, ut an biberit ignoretur."

[70] Ibid., 2.5 (PL 23.304): "Timotheo dolenti stomachum, vinum suadet bibere, non piracium."

According to Jerome wine is the first weapon used by the demons against the young. Both wine and youth doubly inflame the fires of lust. By taking wine the young add fuel to a weak body that is already ablaze with passion.[74] To Furia, the young widow, Jerome writes: "Neither the fires of Aetna, nor the land of Vulcan, nor Vesuvius and Olympus are so full of heat as are youthful bodies filled with wine or inflamed with feasting."[75]

Jerome's bold statement in his letter to Eustochium that wine was "fuel of sensual pleasure" (incendium voluptatis)[76] gave his enemies at Rome the opportunity to accuse him of rashness and even of heresy. Few years later, when he composed his commentaries on Galatians and Ephesians at Bethlehem, he interpreted the pertinent Pauline texts[77] with such clarity that he left no reasonable doubt concerning his genuine views on wine.

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[71] Ep. 22.8 (CSEL 54.154): "Hoc primum moneo, hoc obtestor, ut sponsa Christi vinum fugiat pro veneno."

[72] Ep. 107.8 (CSEL 55.299).

[73] Ep. 22.8 (CSEL 54.155): "Bonum est homini vinum non bibere et carnem non manducare." See Rom. 14.21.

[74] Ibid. (CSEL 54.154): "Haec adversus adulescentiam prima arma sunt daemonum. . . . Vinum et adulescentia duplex incendium voluptatis. Quid oleum flammae adicimus? Quid ardenti corpusculo fomenta ignium ministramus?" Cf. Ambrose, De virginibus 3.2 (FlP 31 [1933], p. 66): "Incendunt enim pariter duo, vinum et adulescentia."

[75] Ep. 54.9 (CSEL 54.474-475).

[76] See note 74 above.

In his Commentary on the Galatians Jerome notes that among the works of the flesh St. Paul places drunkenness in the fourteenth place[78] and that Christ warned His disciples: "Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be overburdened with self-indulgence and drunkenness."[79] Moreover, Jerome describes the evil effects of wine: man's reason is disturbed, his legs are unsteady, his mind vacillates.[80] He rejects the criticism of the statement he had made concerning wine in his treatise addressed to Eustochium: He follows the teaching of the Apostle, he claims; in wine there is lust; in wine there is drunkenness. He does not regret his statement, for in that treatise he condemned the evil effects of wine (*opus vini*), not wine itself as the creature of God. He refused to allow wine to virgins, lest under the pretext of drinking only a small amount, they should acquire the habit of drinking and ultimately endanger their virtue.[81]

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[77] Gal. 5.19-21; Eph. 5.18.

[78] *Comm. in Gal.* 5.19-21 (*PL* 26.445): "Quartum decimum locum inter carnis opera ebrietas tenet."

[79] Luke 21.34.

[80] *Comm. in Gal.* 5.19-21 (*PL* 26.445).

Commenting on Ephesians 5.18: "Et nolite inebriari vino, in quo est luxuria, sed implemini Spiritu sancto," Jerome makes the following reflection: We cannot at the same time fill ourselves with the Holy Spirit and with wine. He who fills himself with wine possesses lack of judgment, anger, impudence and lust--in a word, he is guilty of debauchery. Had the critics of my treatise dedicated to Eustochium correctly understood this Pauline text, they would never have accused me of rashness and even of heresy.[82]

Unfortunately in his libellus Jerome makes no distinction between "drinking wine" and "being filled with wine," that is, "getting drunk." He simply quotes one part of St. Paul's text: "vinum in quo est luxuria," which in the context implies a condemnation of the use of wine itself. However Jerome's remarks in the libellus are not surprising. Being an ardent propagandist for asceticism, he is so absorbed in promoting mortification and safeguarding chastity that at times he substitutes rhetoric for logic.

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[81] Ibid.: "Ne sub occasione parum bibendi plus biberet et periret."

[82] Comm. in Eph. 5.18 (PL 26.561): "Qui vino [impletur], habet insipientiam, furorem, procacitatem, libidinem. Hoc quippe aestimo uno verbo significare luxuriam. Quod si quidam intelligerent, nunquam me temeritatis et haereseos arguissent."

2. Meat

The Romans ate roasted, fried and cooked meats.[83] Jerome mentions meats made tender by pounding[84] and meats seasoned with sauces that were prepared according to the recipes of Apicius.[85] The Romans were also fond of fish. We learn from Jerome that certain kinds, for example, the mullet and the scar, were considered delicacies.[86] In his letter to Nepotianus he ridicules certain wealthy ecclesiastical gourmets who claimed to tell the sea from which different kinds of fish and oysters came or to distinguish by the flavor of the game the provinces which supplied them.[87]

The Christian writers of the early centuries are unanimous in recommending abstinence from meat and wine, so that chastity may be preserved more easily.[88] Perhaps no one is more explicit than Jerome, when he directs his spiritual children. He urges Eustochium to embrace an austere life, not because God, the creator of the universe, takes delight in the rumblings of our intestines or the emptiness of our stomach "but because chastity cannot be preserved otherwise."[89] He does not condemn food which God created, he tells Furia, but he does want to emphasize the fact that "for young men and women some foods are an incentive to sensual pleasures."[90] For this reason he recommends permanent abstinence from meat and wine. At times he bases himself on the motives drawn from the history of religions. For example, the adherents of the Jewish religion reject certain animals as food; the Brahmans of India and the Gymnosophists of Egypt observe a simple diet of porridge, rice, and fruit. Why should not a Christian virgin do in entirety what others do in part?[91] Surely a pearl of great price must have a higher value than a bead of common glass.[92]

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[83] See Daremberg-Saglio 2.125.

[84] Ep. 22.9 (CSEL 54.156): "Carnes contusione mutatas."

[85] Adv. Iovin. 1.40 (PL 23.280): "Ad elaboratas carnes, ad iura Apitii."

[86] Ibid., 2.7 (PL 23.308): "Apud nos . . . mullus et scarus in deliciis computantur."

[87] Ep. 52.6 (CSEL 54.425): "Novi et genera et nomina piscium, in quo litore conca lecta sit, calleo, saporibus avium discerno provincias."

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[88] See Mugnier, "Abstinence," DSp 1.131.

[89] Ep. 22.11 (CSEL 54.158): "Sed quo aliter pudicia tuta esse non possit."

[90] Ep. 54.9 (CSEL 54.474): "Iuvenibus et puellis incentiva esse adsero voluptatum."

[91] Ep. 107.8 (CSEL 55.299).

[92] Ibid. The saying recurs in Ep. 79.9 (CSEL 55.96): "Si tanti vilissimum vitrum, quanti pretiosissimum margaritum?"

To substantiate this practice of abstinence Jerome distorts the Pauline text in which the Apostle warns against giving scandal: "It is good for a man not to drink wine and not to eat meat."[93] He returns to the subject in his treatise against Jovinian: "If you want to be perfect, it is good not to drink wine and not to eat meat."[94] His very next words supply the motive: "If you want to be perfect, it is better to feed the soul rather than the body."[95]

3. Dainty Food

Jerome tells Eustochium that before he came to Syria, he was accustomed to eat various dainty foods.[96] One gets a fair idea of the nature of this dainty food from the passages in Jerome's polemic against Jovinian. This "Christian Epicurus"[97] gave up his ascetic practices, that is, "the wearing of a soiled tunic, of walking barefoot, and of eating common bread and drinking only water," and exchanged his ascetic diet "for wine flavored with honey, for dainty dishes and the sauces of Apicius and Paxamus."[98] Furthermore, from a text of Jovinian, preserved by Jerome, one infers that the following species of birds and animals were used as foods by wealthy Roman families: hogs, roes, stags, deer, boar, hares, wild and domestic geese, wild ducks and thrushes.[99] Jovinian remarks: "All these creatures God created for nothing, if they are not to be eaten."[100] In his letter to Eustochium Jerome mentions the chirper, a fattened bird, commonly called ποππύζον.[101] Other examples of luxurious foods are mentioned by Jerome in his letter to Nepotianus, where he ridicules the hypocrisy of a certain group of ecclesiastics. They are wont to abstain from oil, but in place of it they search out foods that are secured with much difficulty. Among these Jerome enumerates dried figs, pepper, nuts, dates, wheaten flour, honey, and pistachios.[102] Later, writing to Salvina, he also enumerates pheasants, turtledoves, and the Ionian cocks.[103]

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[93] Ep. 22.8 (CSEL 54.155). See Rom. 14.21.

[94] Adv. Iovin. 2.6 (PL 23.307): "Si vis perfectus esse, bonum est vinum non bibere et carnem non manducare."

[95] Ibid.: "Si vis perfectus esse, melius est saginare animam quam corpus."

[96] Ep. 22.30 (CSEL 54.189): "Consuetudine lautioris cibi propter caelorum me regna castrassem."

[97] Adv. Iovin. 1.1 (PL 23.221).

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[98] Ibid., 1.40 (PL 23.280).

[99] Ibid., 2.5 (PL 23.303-304).

[100] Ibid.: "Si non comeduntur, haec omnia frustra a Deo creata sunt."

[101] Ep. 22.28 (CSEL 54.186): "Prandium nidoribus probat et 'altilis,' γέρων vulgo ποππύζον nominatur."

[102] Ep. 52.12 (CSEL 54.435).

[103] Ep. 79.7 (CSEL 55.95).

4. Worldly Companionship

Jerome counsels the ascetic to remain at home as much as possible, for solitude is a great aid in the preservation of virginal fidelity. "Appear in public but seldom," he tells Eustochium. Though foolish virgins may wander abroad, the prudent virgin must remain at home with her Bridegroom. If she shuts her door and, in compliance with the precept of the Gospel, prays to her Father in secret, her Bridegroom will come and dine with her. Never will the occasion for going out be lacking, if a virgin intends always to go out--when it is necessary and when it is not.[104]

The ascetic must shun the crowds in towns. "To me," says Jerome, "the town is a prison, and solitude is a paradise, Why do we monks long for crowded cities--we whose very name speaks of solitariness?"[105]

Virgins are not to make frequent visits to the tombs of the martyrs--a practice which can easily become a pretext for going out. One can seek the intercession of the martyrs in one's own cell.[106]

Jerome warns Rusticus that during his visits to his mother he should avoid meeting other women. He cites the example of St. John the Baptist: neither his saintly mother's love nor his father's wealth could prevail upon him to remain in his parents' home at the risk of his chastity. He took up his abode in the wilderness, for his eyes sought for Christ alone.[107]

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[104] Ep. 22.17 and 26 (CSEL 54.165 and 181).

[105] Ep. 125.8 (CSEL 56.127): "Quid desideramus urbium frequentiam, qui de singularitate censemur?"

[106] Ep. 22.17 (CSEL 54.165): "Martyres tibi quaerantur in cubiculo tuo."

To the widows and virgins of Rome Jerome proposed Asella as a model in this regard. Such was her exemplary life that even the Roman clergy venerated her. She sought her delight in solitude. In her narrow cell she enjoyed a spacious paradise.[108] She seldom went out or conversed with any man. Instead she constantly communed with her Bridegroom in prayer and singing of psalms. Though she loved her sister Marcella dearly, she rarely paid her a visit. The only visit she loved to make was the visit to the martyrs' shrines, and the more so, because she was never recognized whenever she went out. In the heart of Rome, the center of vain shows and idle pleasure, she made for herself in her room a truly eremitical desert (heremum monachorum).[109]

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[107] Ep. 125.7 (CSEL 56.127).

[108] Ep. 24.2 and 5 (CSEL 54.215 and 217).

[109] Ep. 24.4 (CSEL 54.216): "Sponso aut orans loquebatur aut psallens." Marcella too was wont to pay frequent visits to the shrines of the apostles and martyrs, where, shunning the crowds of pilgrims, she would spent the time in private prayer. See Ep. 127.4 (CSEL 56.148).

A far superior model for imitation is the Virgin Mary. When the angel Gabriel found her alone in her room, she was troubled, apparently because she was unaccustomed to the presence of man.[110]

The virgin must avoid the homes of aristocratic families. "I would not have you consort with married women," he warns Eustochium. "Why do you, the bride of God, make haste to call on the wife of a mortal man?" The virgin should take a holy pride in her relationship to her divine Bridegroom; she is far better than those women who are puffed up by their husbands' honors and distinctions. In particular, the virgin must not associate with those whom necessity has made widows. Though they have changed their dress, they have not changed their ruling passion. Their houses are full of guests, full of flatterers, among whom may be seen even members of the clergy. For her companions the virgin must choose those whose countenance is thin and pallid from fasting and whose one loving desire is to be in Christ's company.[111]

Leaving Rome for the last time, Jerome strongly urges Marcella to join him in the Holy Land. True, he admitted, at Rome there was the holy Church, the trophies of the apostles and martyrs; but the display, the power and the size of the city, the seeing and the being seen, the greeting and the being greeted, the praising and the detracting, the listening and the talking, the necessity of being subjected to so many contacts with others--"all this was foreign to the principle and peace of ascetical life."[112] Jerome described in lyric strains the simple rusticity and tranquillity that reigns in the little town of Bethlehem, where but for the chanting of psalms--the only love song (amatoriae cantiones) of the land--there is complete silence.[113]

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[110] Ep. 107.7 (CSEL 55.298).

[111] Ep. 22.16-17 (CSEL 54.163-165).

V. Fasting[114]

1. Importance

According to Jerome fasting in the life of the ascetic is of the utmost importance. In fact, in his letter to Demetrias he lays down the principle that, though not a virtue in itself, fasting is nevertheless the foundation of all virtues.[115] It is a means not an end in itself. To his monks of Bethlehem he clearly explains his teaching.

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[112] Ep. 46.12 (CSEL 54.342): "A proposito monachorum et quiete aliena sunt."

[113] Ibid.: "In Christi . . . villula tota rusticitas et extra psalmos silentium est."

[114] For special studies of fasting in Christian antiquity, see the excellent articles of R. Arbesmann (above, A, n. 28) and H. Musurillo (above, A, n. 3).

[115] Ep. 130.11 (CSEL 56.191): "Ieiunium non perfecta virtus, sed ceterarum virtutum fundamentum est."

They must not leap to the conclusion that if they fast they shall ascend at once to the kingdom of heaven. Fasts do not necessarily lead up to the kingdom of heaven, though without them, we shall not arrive there. Alone they are of no value; together with other things they are. "Why do I say this?" asks Jerome. "Because fasting is, as it were, the foundation and the support of those who are mounting to greater heights."

Those who wish to mount the ladder of perfection must take the first step--that step is fasting. As they make the first step, they are withdrawing from the earth and beginning to ascend. Nevertheless, they are still thinking of material things, they are still preoccupied with the care of the body, they still have to climb many more steps on the ladder of perfection.[116]

For the preservation of chastity fasting is absolutely essential. Speaking of the necessity of fasting Jerome at times makes use of exaggerated expressions, but he never appeals to the Manichean principle according to which some foods--for example, meat--are intrinsically a source of sin. He urges abstention from these foods not because they are emanations of the evil principle, but because he considers such a renunciation a most efficacious means for weakening the sexual appetite.[117] God, the Creator and Lord of the universe, does not take delight in the rumblings of the intestines, the emptiness of our stomach, or the inflammation of our lungs. The ascetic fasts, "because chastity cannot be preserved otherwise."[118]

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[116] Tract. de Ps. 119 (CC 78.249-250).

Jerome formulates several regulations on fasting which to the modern man appear "almost inhuman."[119] However, as years go by Jerome's first rigorism undergoes a change, and we note an evolution taking place in his attitude toward the practice of fasting. Ten years after the publication of his treatise to Eustochium, he recommends moderate fasts to young Nepotianus: "Let your fasts be pure, chaste, simple, moderate and free from superstition."[120] About the same time he gives this instruction to Furia: The practice of taking little food that leaves the stomach unsatisfied is preferable to fasts of three days' duration. That rain is best which falls upon the ground gently; a violent downpour washes away the soil. And so a little food taken every day is much better than a full meal taken every so often.[121]

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[117] See A. Penna, S. Gerolamo (Rome, 1949), p. 424. According to Bickel (op. cit., p. 459), Jerome's teaching on fasting is more rigorist than that of Ambrose or Augustine. This fact, he claims, can be partly explained by his literary dependence on Tertullian. Furthermore, it is Bickel's (ibid., p. 457) view that torture of the body through ascetical penances (die Buss-und Peinigungsaskese der Körpermisshandlung) is totally unknown to the three Western Fathers.

[118] Ep. 22.11 (CSEL 54.158): "Sed quo aliter pudicitia tuta esse non possit."

[119] See Penna, op. cit., p. 424: "Un rigorismo quasi disumano."

[120] Ep. 42.13 (CSEL 54.435).

After a period of ten more years, again we find Jerome insisting on moderation in fasting. He tells Laeta that he disapproves of long and excessive fasts, especially in the case of the young. He has learned by his own experience that the ass on the road makes for the inn, when it is overweary.[122]

Less than ten years later Jerome instructs Rusticus on the qualities of a true ascetic. One of his aims must be "to quench the heat of the body by the help of chilling fasts." But he warns him: "Let your fasts be moderate." If they are carried to excess, they weaken the stomach, which in turn will demand more food and thus the way is open to wicked desires. Finally Jerome briefly sums up his teaching on fasting: "A frugal, temperate diet is beneficial both to the body and the soul."[123]

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[121] Ep. 54.10 (CSEL 54.477).

[122] Ep. 107.10 (CSEL 555.301): "Displicent mihi in teneris vel maxime aetatibus longa et immoderata ieiunia."

[123] Ep. 125.7 (CSEL 56.124): "Modicus ac temperatus cibus et carni et animae utilis est."

2. Jerome's Practice of Fasting and Abstinence

Let us see how Jerome himself practiced fasting and abstinence. We will consider briefly the three periods of his ascetic life: the Syrian, the Roman, and that of Bethlehem.

a) Syrian

In his letter to Eustochium Jerome does not give a detailed list of the foods he ate in Antioch, but he does underscore two facts: first, that for the sake of the kingdom of heaven he cut himself off from all rich food (lautioris cibi);[124] second, that during the Syrian period his meals consisted principally of raw vegetables and water.[125]

Doubtless during that period Jerome was not intellectually idle, as was, for example, the hermit he met in the desert of Chalcis, who lived in an old cistern for many years and limited his daily meal to five dried figs.[126] Though Jerome led a sedentary life, he nevertheless kept himself busy throughout the day. Besides writing letters to friends, he undertook the study of Hebrew and the copying of manuscripts, in order to increase his ever growing library.

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[124] Ep. 22.30 (CSEL 54.189).

[125] Ibid., 7 (CSEL 54.153).

[126] Vita Pauli 6 (PL 23.22).

Obviously Jerome's Syrian diet was deficient in nourishment. In fact in his letter to Mark, Jerome speaks of his physical weakness, which he fears would not enable him to undertake the long journey to Antioch during the rigors of winter. For that reason he asks that the hospitality of the desert be extended to him for a few months longer, that is, until the coming of spring. But if even that interval is denied him, he is ready to depart.[127]

b) Roman

There is no information about Jerome's diet during the three year period extending from the time he quit the desert of Chalcis until his departure for the West. No doubt he was physically strong enough to undertake the long journey from Constantinople to Rome.

From his letters written at Rome we gather positive data concerning his Roman diet. Writing to Asella, in August, 385,[128] Jerome reveals in passing what had been his usual diet during his Roman stay. Attacking the worldly lives of some Christians in the city and praising the austere life of Paula, Jerome also mentions his meagre diet. "I fill my belly with beans," he writes.[129] Shortly before this he urged Marcella to join him in the country where she could enjoy rest and quiet, far from the dissipating city life. He adds: "Let us live there on coarse bread and on green vegetables, watered with our own hands, and on milk--that rural delicacy, cheap and harmless." As they lead such a frugal life, sleep will not call them away from prayer nor overfeeding from study.[130] In term of calories, Cuesta points out, Jerome received sufficient nourishment for each day, even though he limited himself to one daily meal of bread, beans and goat's milk.[131]

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[127] Ep. 17.3 (CSEL 54.72).

[128] Cavallera, op. cit., 2.156.

[129] Ep. 45.5 (CSEL 54.326).

c) Bethlehem

When Jerome settled permenently in Bethlehem, he was about thirty-nine years of age. He was to live there thirty-four years longer. After spending six months with Jerome, Postumianus left us this brief sketch of the indefatigable monk of Bethlehem: "He is always fully absorbed in reading and in books. Day and night he takes no rest. He is continually reading or writing something."[132]

What was Jerome's diet during this last period of his life? Once the monasteries were erected, he began to lead a cenobitic life. He no longer prepared his own meals, for the nuns of the nearby convent were in charge of the kitchen. Praising the heroic life of Paula and Eustochium, Jerome describes some of the chores they attended to in the monastery. One of the kitchen chores was "to put heads of cabbage into the boiling pot."[133] In this description of monastery life we note that for the first time Jerome's diet included cooked vegetables.

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[130] Ep. 43.3 (CSEL 54.320).

[131] J. Janini Cuesta, San Jerónimo y el ayuno (Madrid, 1949), pp. 60-62.

[132] Sulpicius Severus, Dialogus 1.9 (CSEL 1.161): "Totus semper in lectione, totus in libris est: non die neque nocte requiescit: aut legit aliquid semper aut scribit."

A glance at Jerome's lifetime practice of fasting reveals one clear fact: his diet underwent an evolution. At first it was entirely excessive; later, when he led a cenobitic life at Bethlehem, it became less austere, permitting him to devote his energies to numerous scriptural and exegetical works.

3. Spiritual Fasting

In his letter to Eustochium Jerome points out the primacy of the internal, spiritual element in fasting. He quotes Isaia 58.3-7 on the fast acceptable to God. Rather than the strict observance of fast days God enjoins the practice of justice and the works of charity. These are far more pleasing to God than fasting. One may keep a fast and still be angry at his neighbor; another may not keep a fast and still show a kind disposition toward everyone. One who eats in moderation and gives thanks to God is far more pleasing to Him than one who quarrels with his neighbor. Finally Jerome asks: "What sort of a fast can that be whose wrath--even the full moon finds unchanged?"[134]

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[133] Ep. 66.13 (CSEL 54.564).

In the practice of fasting the ascetic must beware of vainglory. According to the counsel of Christ, when we fast we should anoint our head and wash our face, so that we may not seek the glory of men, but fast unto the Lord.[135] Elsewhere Jerome recalls the admonition of Christ and remarks: "Christ commands that when we fast we should show ourselves happy and joyful."[136] This point Jerome emphasizes in his letter to Paulinus: "There is nothing great in wearing a sad or disfigured face and in boasting of fasting."[137]

Though Jerome attaches so much importance to fasting, yet he strongly exhorts his fellow monks: "Let us rather abstain from vice than from food."[138] By our fasting we give nothing to God, he tells them. We do it for our sins, we do it for the salvation of our souls. And that is what the Lord desires.[139]

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[134] Ep. 22.37 (CSEL 54.201-202).

[135] See Matt. 6.16-18.

[136] Comm. in Matt. 6.17-19 (PL 26.45). See Ep. 22.27 (CSEL 54.183).

[137] Ep. 58.2 (CSEL 54.529).

[138] Sermo de Quadragesima (CC 78.534).

[139] Tract. de Ps. 107 (CC 78.265).

4. Means of Self-Conquest

Jerome clearly teaches that every human being born into this world is tainted with Adam's sin.[140] Quoting St. Paul (Romans 5.14), he asserts: "As soon as they [men] were born, they became subject to sin 'after the likeness of the transgression of Adam.'"[141] As a consequence of this sin man is deprived of a certain goodness and rectitude with which he was endowed when God created him.[142] In his treatise against Jovinian Jerome treats of carnal concupiscence and explicitly attributes to original sin man's inclination to sins against chastity. He writes: "Having then been created by God good and upright, by our own fault we have fallen to a worse condition; and that which in paradise had been upright, when we left paradise was corrupt."[143]

We cannot escape from this adversary by bodily flight. "This foe is shut up within," Jerome instructs Eustochium. "Wherever we go, we carry the enemy with us."[144]

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[140] See J. Fahey, Doctrina Sancti Hieronymi de gratiae divinae necessitate (Mundelein, 1937), p. 25.

[141] Adv. Pelag. 2.4 (PL 23.562): "Statim ut nati sunt subiacuere peccato 'in similitudinem praevaricationis Adae.'"

[142] See Fahey, op. cit., p. 26.

[143] Adv. Iovin. 1.29 (PL 23.262-263): "Cum ergo boni creati simus et recti a Deo, ipsi vitio nostro sumus ad peiora delapsi; et quod in paradiso rectum in nobis fuerat, egredientibus de paradiso depravatum est."

[144] Ep. 22.8 (CSEL 54.154).

In one of his homilies Jerome develops the following comparison: All of us have in our soul the spark of concupiscence, which is like the spark of fire hiding in the ashes. As long as the spark of fire is not fed, it does not burst into flame. Likewise, if the spark in our soul is not fed, it does not burst into flame, in other words, concupiscence is kept under control.[145]

In his treatise against Jovinian Jerome compares the bodily senses to madly racing horses. The soul, their charioteer, holds the reins. As the horses without a driver go at break-neck speed, so the body, if not governed by the reasonable soul, rushes to its own destruction.[146] Commenting on Psalm 75 Jerome urges his monks to beg God to make them "kings of earth," that is, to assist them to subject their flesh and rule over it. He recalls the words of the Apostle: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection," and concludes: "May our soul be in command, our body in subjection."[147]

Someone may say: "Why should I be concerned with fasts? There are many who do not fast and are saints?" That view Jerome decidedly rejects by quoting the practice of St. Paul. If he, "the vessel of election," chastised his body, because he feared the lures of the flesh, are we to consider ourselves safe?"[148] By bodily mortification the ascetic must bring his body into subjection. Echoing the cry of St. Paul, "When I am weak, then I am strong," Jerome lays great stress on the ascetical value of bodily weakness. The weakness of the body becomes the vigor of the soul.[149] This is what the monk must do: weaken his body by mortification and thus render his soul vigorous.[150] This concept Jerome emphasizes especially when he comments on the Psalms for his monks at Bethlehem. "I maintain that when the monk fasts, he becomes stronger from the fast; when his knees tremble from fasting, then is he strongest."[151]

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[145] *Tract*. *de* *Ps*. 106 (*CC* 78.200-201).

[146] *Adv*. *Iovin*. 2.10 (*PL* 23.312).

[147] *Tract*. *de* *Ps*. 75 (*CC* 78.54). See 1 Cor. 9.27.

5. Hygienic Fasting

According to Courcelle Jerome had at his disposal the principal works of Galen, which he read personally, since his references are very exact. These writings he employed especially in his treatise against Jovinian to show that Galen, a pagan writer, furnished the followers of asceticism with a scientific basis.[152]

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[148] *Tract. de Ps.* 119 (*CC* 78.249).

[149] *Tract. de Ps.* 119 (*CC* 78.240): "Infirmitas corporis, sanitas animae est." 2 Cor. 12.10.

[150] *Tract. de Ps.* 83 (*CC* 78.97-98).

[151] *Tract. de Ps.* 108 (*CC* 78.218).

Writing to a priest in Rome named Rufinus, Jerome informs him that for ten months he suffered from a wound in his right hand that would not heal. Finally he sought the advice of doctors. In his Commentary on Isaia 38.21-22 he recalls that the doctors prescribed for him the same remedy that Isaia had ordered for king Ezechias: a poultice of figs (massam de ficis) applied to the sore. "For this reason," Jerome remarks, "medicine is not to be despised, for it was instituted by God."[153]

In case of sickness wine was believed to possess medicinal qualities. On one occasion Paula was gravely ill at Bethlehem, and doctors urged upon her the necessity of taking a little light wine to speed her recovery; they feared she might become afflicted with dropsy, if she continued to drink only water. Jerome secretly appealed to bishop Epiphanius of Salamis to induce her to take some wine. In spite of his many exhortations the holy prelate had no success. When Jerome asked him about the outcome of his talk with Paula, he remarked: "Old as I am, I have been almost persuaded to give up drinking wine altogether."[154]

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[152] See P. Courcelle, Les lettres grecques en Occident (Paris, 1948), p. 75: "Il [Jérôme] les utilise surtout contre Jovinien pour montrer que Galien, auteur profane, fournit une base scientifique aux partisans de l'ascétisme."

[153] See Ep. 74.6 (CSEL 55.29) and Comm. in Esaiam 38.21-22 (CC 73.450): "Per hoc non spernendam esse medicinam, quae usu constet et experimento quia et hanc fecerit Deus."

In his letter to Furia Jerome quotes Galen's περὶ ὑγιεινῶν λόγων to point out that the bodies of the young glow with an innate warmth, so that for these persons all food which increases their bodily heat is harmful. On the other hand to eat or drink anything that is cold is conducive to their health. Quoting Galen, Jerome instructs Furia that aged wines are beneficial to persons advanced in years, for they suffer from humors and chilliness.[155]

In his praise of Asella Jerome mentions the good effects of her fasting: she has just reached her fiftieth year without ever suffering any abdominal or intestinal pains. She is sound of body and even sounder of mind.[156]

Conclusion

Jerome fully realizes that the ascetical program of renunciation and mortification which he outlined for Eustochium and other ascetics seems very hard. But there's one thing that will render it easy. Jerome emphatically declares: "Let us love Christ . . . and we shall find that every difficult thing is easy."[157]

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[154] *Ep*. 108.21 (*CSEL* 55.337).

[155] *Ep*. 54.9 (*CSEL* 54.475-476).

[156] See *Ep*. 24.4 (*CSEL* 54.216). Bickel (*op*. *cit*., p. 460) remarks that the fasting which Jerome himself had practiced brought him to ripe old age.

[157] *Ep*. 22.40 (*CSEL* 54.207): "Amemus et nos Christum . . . et facile videbitur omne difficile."

The true ascetic must be inspired by the example of the Son of God. Jerome summarizes briefly the hard life led by Christ. For our salvation He becomes the son of man. For ten months He waits in a womb to be born; He comes forth covered with blood; He is wrapped in swaddling clothes. He is contained by the narrow confines of a manger. He lives in obscurity up to his thirtieth year, content with the poverty of his parents. He is scourged and is silent. He is crucified and prays for those who crucified Him. We have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. What return can we give Him? To pay for His blood with our blood is the only worthy return. Jerome adds: "Having been redeemed by the blood of Christ, we gladly die for our Redeemer."[158]

We have the example of the saints; no one is crowned without a struggle, Abel, Abraham . . . every one of the saints suffered various hardships. And our struggle here is only for a short time. Jerome repeats the Apostle's reminder to the Romans 8.18: "For the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that will be revealed in us."[159]

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[158] Cf. S. Ulatowski, "L'idée sotériologique dans les écrits apologétiques de s. Jérôme," Miscellanea Theologica Card. Kakowski Oblata (Warsaw, 1930), pp. 179-198.

[159] Ep. 22.39 (CSEL 54.206).

He exhorts Eustochium: "When it seems to you that your burden is heavy, read Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. No ascetic can claim for himself even the smallest portion of the catalog of these virtues of the Apostle." Our confidence must be that of St. Paul who exclaimed in his letter to Timothy: "I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. For the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will give to me." "Unless you use violence," he tells Eustochium, "you will not take the kingdom of heaven. Unless you knock inportunately, you shall not receive the sacramental bread (panem sacramenti)."[160]

With moving simplicity Jerome speaks of the power that takes possession of the soul when it is lovingly united with Christ. The ascetic who has died to the world and has crucified his flesh with all its faults and lusts--such a one will boldly proclaim with the Apostle: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? . . . No creature will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Jerome repeats: "Indeed, nothing is hard for lovers; no effort is difficult for one who is passionately eager."[161]

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[160] Ibid., 40 (CSEL 54.205-208). 2 Tim. 4.7-8.

[161] Ibid. (CSEL 54.207): "Nihil amantibus durum est, nullus difficilis cupienti labor." Cf. Rom. 8.35, 39.

B. *Lectio Divina*

Another important activity of the ascetic is the reading of Sacred Scripture.[1] This is closely related to prayer. In fact, according to Jerome's program, drawn up for the ascetic education of a young virgin, biblical reading must follow prayer and prayer must follow reading.[2] To his disciples Jerome offers the example of Origen. "No one can fail to admire his enthusiasm for the Scriptures," he writes to Pammachius. He further asserts that Origen not only devoted the hours of the day to biblical exegesis but spent part of the night in sacred study.[3] Jerome tells Paula that he even learned the Bible by heart and earned for himself the title "the man of steel."[4] Furthermore, to Marcella he relates how Ambrose, Origen's wealthy disciple, used to recall that it was his master's constant practice to have reading of the Scriptures follow upon prayer and prayer upon reading.[5]

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[1] See D. Gorce, *La lectio divina des origines du cénobitisme à saint Benoît et Cassiodore*: I. *Saint Jérôme et la lecture sacrée dans le milieu ascétique romain* (Paris, 1925), p. iii. In this work Gorce treats of the nature, importance and fruits of the *lectio divina* in the ascetico-biblical program which Jerome developed as spiritual director in Rome. The present section of Chapter IV owes much to Gorce's delightful and important study.

[2] *Ep*. 107.9 (*CSEL* 55.300): "Orationi lectio, lectioni succedat oratio."

[3] *Ep*. 84.8 (*CSEL* 55.131).

[4] *Ep*. 33.4 (*CSEL* 54.255): "Qui tanto in sanctarum scripturarum commentariis sudore laboravit, ut iuste adamantis nomen acceperit"; *Ep*. 43.1 (*CSEL* 54.318). See Eusebius, *Hist*. *Eccl*. 6.14.10 (GCS 2.552).

I. Jerome's Enthusiasm for the Scriptures

Jerome himself was an assiduous reader of the word of God. His personal enthusiasm for the study of the Bible glows throughout his whole ascetical life. Postumianus, who lived six months with him in Bethlehem, traces for us the profile of the scriptural scholar: "He is always deeply absorbed in reading and in books. Day and night he takes no rest. He is continually reading or writing something."[6]

Jerome never tires of recommending Bible reading to his spiritual disciples. His advice to Eustochium may be termed classical: "Let sleep creep upon you as you hold the [sacred] codex in your hand; let the sacred page catch your drooping face."[7] He exhorts the young priest Nepotian to read the divine Scriptures more often. "Nay, never let the sacred volume out of your hands," he writes.[8] A similar advice he gives to Salvina, a widow: "Let the sacred text be always in your hands."[9] Reminding Paulinus of St. Paul's zeal for sacred learning--which he calls his spiritual armor--Jerome urges him to live, so to speak, in the midst of the sacred books, meditating upon them constantly. A life devoted to the study of the Scriptures engenders in us a foretaste of heaven. The divine knowledge we thus acquire during life will not perish, but abide with us throughout eternity.[10]

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[5] Ep. 43.1 (CSEL 54.318): "Hoc diebus egisse vel noctibus, ut et lectio orationem susciperet et oratio lectionem."

[6] Sulpicius Severus, Dial. 1.9 (CSEL 1.151).

[7] Ep. 22.17 (CSEL 54.165): "Tenenti codicem somnus obrepat et cadentem faciem pagina sancta suscipiat." See Arns, op. cit., p. 123: "Il [Jérôme] emploie le mot codex surtout pour l'Ecriture."

[8] Ep. 52.7 (CSEL 54.426): "Divinas scripturas saepius lege; immo numquam de manibus tuis sacra lectio deponatur."

2. Enthusiasm of Jerome's Disciples for the Scriptures

Jerome's best pupils in the biblical courses at Rome were Marcella and Paula. In his epitaphium of Marcella he extols her ardent love of the Sacred Scriptures. "It surpasses all belief," he tells Principia.[11] How often the words of the Psalmist were on her lips: "Within my heart I treasure Thy words, that I may not sin against Thee." She chose as her own the ideal of the perfect man described in the introductory Psalm: to take delight in and to meditate on the law of the Lord day and night.[12] Meditation meant for her not the mere murmuring of the words of the Scriptures, but above all their fulfillment in action.[13] Scriptural study was for her only a means, not an end in itself. She firmly believed that by the daily practice of the evangelical virtues, she would merit a deeper understanding of the Scriptures. This lesson she learned from the Psalmist: "Through Thy precepts I gained understanding."[14]

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[9] Ep. 79.9 (CSEL 55.97-98): "Semper in manibus tuis divina sit lectio."

[10] Ep. 53.10 (CSEL 54.462).

[11] Ep. 127.4 (CSEL 56.148): "Divinarum scripturarum ardor incredibilis."

[12] Ibid. See Ps. 118.11; Ps. 1.2.

Paula was Jerome's most extraordinary disciple. In the lengthy epitaphium dedicated to her, Jerome points out that from the time of her husband's death to the end of her life her sole desire was to please the Savior and to cling to Him with her whole heart.[15] Her love of Christ revealed itself in the passionate zeal which she brought to the reading and study of the Scriptures under Jerome's guidance.[16] Not only did she succeed in learning them by heart; she even learned Hebrew and chanted the psalms in the original language.[17] No nun in her convent of

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[13] Ep. 130.4 (CSEL 56.148): "Meditationem legis non replicando, quae scripta sunt . . . sed in opere intellegens."

[14] Ibid. See C. Favez, "Trois disciples de saint Jérôme," Bulletin de la Société des Etudes de Lettres 12 (1938), 223-224.

[15] Ep. 108.15 (CSEL 55.326-327).

[16] Ibid., 26 (CSEL 55.344): "Denique conpulit me, ut et vetus et novum instrumentum cum filia me disserente perlegeret."

[17] Ibid. (CSEL 55.344-345).

Bethlehem was allowed to be ignorant of the psalms; each day all had to memorize a portion of the Scriptures.[18] It was from the Bible that she drew strength in time of temptation and misfortune; it was in the Bible that she sought consolation in time of trial and sickness.[19] On her deathbed, hearing her nuns chanting the words of the Canticle: "Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one, and come," she joyfully whispered: "I believe that I shall see the bounty of the Lord in the land of the living."[20] Truly, as Favez observes, through constant and prayerful familiarity with the Sacred Scriptures, Paula became a perfect type of the mystic.[21]

3. Piety: Preparation for the *Lectio*

The study of the sacred writings, according to Jerome, must be joined with piety, otherwise it remains sterile. He asks: "Why is Helvidius incapable of grasping the full meaning of the Scriptures?" This heretic draws arguments from the Bible, but he fails to penetrate the meaning of the scriptural texts, for he is not armed with piety, which crowns the work of the spirit.[22]

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[18] *Ibid*., 20 (*CSEL* 55.335).

[19] *Ibid*., 18-19 (*CSEL* 55.329-334).

[20] *Ibid*., 28 (*CSEL* 55.347). See Cant. 2.10-11; Ps. 26.13.

[21] Favez, *op*. *cit*., p. 227.

[22] *Adv*. *Helvidium* 2 (*PL* 23.194): "Se [Helvidium] et legere potuisse quae scripta sunt, et non potuisse quae pietate roborata sunt, cognoscere."

To corroborate his point Jerome could rightly adduce his first product in the exegetical field--the Commentary on Abdia.[23] This prophetic book he had interpreted allegorically, although he knew nothing of its historical meaning (historiam). The fact that he was well versed in pagan literature created in him the conviction that he could understand a sacred book whose meaning was sealed to him.[24] With shame Jerome admits to Pammachius that the juvenile production proved foolhardy, for he failed to realize the need of God's illumination for such a scriptural enterprise.[25] Nevertheless, that novice effort revealed one redeeming feature: the young writer's incipient love for the Scriptures.[26]

4. Jerome's Concept of the Lectio

How was this lectio done? With regard to literature, it must be recalled that in Roman times people read with the lips, pronouncing the words they saw, and with the ears, listening to the words pronounced.[27] This manner of reading was continued in patristic times.[28] Thus the readers heard what they called "the voices of the pages."[29] Cases of silent reading were exceptional. A well-known instance is described by Augustine in his _Confessions_. On one occasion, while visiting St. Ambrose, to his great surprise he observed that the bishop was reading the text before him in silence (_tacite_), that is, with his eyes only, without vocalizing the words.[30] _Legere_ implied, of course, _audire_; one understood only what one heard. The act of verbalizing was not divorced from the visual act. The latter was accompanied spontaneously by the movement of the lips, and the _lectio_ was habitually an active reading.[31]

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[23] No trace of this commentary now remains. The extant Commentary on Abdia was written a quarter of a century later. See L. N. Hartmann, "St. Jerome as an Exegete," A Monument to Saint Jerome (New York, 1952), p. 38.

[24] Comm. in Abdiam, Prologus (PL 25.1149): "Litteras saeculi noveram et ob id putabam me librum legere posse signatum."

[25] Ibid.: "Ignorabam diversa esse charismata."

[26] Ibid.: "In adolescentia mea provocatus ardore et studio scripturarum."

In this way _lectio_ is very close to _meditatio_. Early Christian writers generally use the word _meditari_ in referring to a text, and the text _par excellence_ is the Holy

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[27] See E. Norden, _Die antike Kunstprosa_ (Leipzig, 1898), 1.6. For a bibliography on ancient reading see H. I. Marrou, _Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité_ (Paris, 1950), p. 516.

[28] See J. Leclercq, _L'amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu_ (Paris, 1957), p. 21.

[29] See J. Balogh, "_Voces Paginarum_. _Beiträge_ zur Geschichte des lauten Lesens und Schreibens," _Philologus_ 82 (1926/27), 84-109; 202-240.

[30] _Conf_. 6.3.3 (_CSEL_ 33.116): "Sed cum legebat, oculi ducebantur per paginas . . . vox autem et lingua quiescebat." Cf. also H. I. Marrou, _Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique_ (Paris, 1938), p. 89, n. 3: "Saint Ambroise lisait d'ordinaire à voix basse."

[31] Leclercq, _op. cit._, p. 22.

Writ.[32] In the Bible meditari means fundamentally to learn the Thorah, while pronouncing the words in a low tone and murmuring them with the mouth.[33] This, according to the ancients, was called "learning by the mouth," since the mouth meditates wisdom: "Os iusti meditabitur sapientiam."[34] Thus three phases of the same activity were combined in the lectio: audible reading, reflection of the mind, and exercise of the memory.

Jerome introduces a fourth element in the lectio divina: the element of good works. Meditation on the law of the Lord must not consist in mere reading; it must move the will to action.[35] This activity must terminate both in salutary affections, such as compunction, desire of heaven, and in good works. Jerome explains his thought to the monks of Bethlehem: "If I stretch forth my hand in almsgiving, I am meditating on the law of God; if I visit the sick, my feet are meditating on the law of God; if I do what is prescribed, I am meditating with my whole body what others are meditating with their lips."[36]

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Through the Vulgate the word meditatio was introduced into the Christian vocabulary, where it was to continue to retain the shade of meaning given to it by Sacred Scripture. See Leclercq, op. cit., p. 22.

[34] Leclercq, op. cit., p. 24. Ps. 36.30.

[35] Tract. de Ps. 1 (CC 78.5): "Meditatio ergo legis non in legendo, sed in faciendo."

[36] Ibid. (CC 78.6).

The reading and meditation of the divine words is at times described by Jerome by the use of the theme of spiritual food and nutrition. The knowledge of the Scriptures--this is the soul's true food and drink,[37] this is its heavenly bread.[38] Meditation on the law of the Lord--such is the constant nourishment of every Christian soul.[39] Jerome instructs his monks that the soul being immortal requires immortal food. Just as the body dies unless it is given its proper food, even so the soul dies if it is not given spiritual food. There are foods for the body; there are foods likewise for the soul--namely, the Sacred Scriptures.[40]

The continuous repetition of the sacred words during the _meditatio_ is described by Jerome by the expressive word _ruminatio_.[41] Thus he tells his monks that a member of the Church ruminates, so to speak, the words of God, that is, he ponders deeply over them, and "whatever lies buried in the letter of the Scriptures, he brings forth in the spirit."[42] A member of the Synagogue, on the other hand, does not truly ruminate. Jerome explains: "He reads merely the letter without reflecting upon it; he looks for no deeper meaning than the literal message of the word."[43] Quite different is the case of the sinner, burdened by the weight of his crimes. To all appearances he may seem to be ruminating the Holy Scriptures, but actually he neglects the duties enjoined by them.[44]

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[37] _Comm_. _in_ _Eccl_. 3.13 (_CC_ 72.278): "Verus enim cibus et potus, qui ex verbo Dei sumitur, scientia scripturarum est."

[38] _Ep_. 78.15 (_CSEL_ 55.65): "Caelestem scripturarum panem." See _Comm._ _in_ _Eccl_. 12.3 (_CC_ 72.353).

[39] _Ep_. 5.2 (_CSEL_ 54.22).

[40] _Tract_. _de_ _Ps_. 127 (_CC_ 78.264).

[41] Jerome attempts to describe this physical process in _Tract_. _de_ _Ps_. 95 (_CC_ 78.132).

5. Jerome's Program of Scriptural Study

According to Jerome scriptural education to be efficient must begin quite early. Therefore, he lays down a program of studies for the young ascetic. In the curriculum outlined in his letter to Laeta, Sacred Scripture is the alpha and omega.[45] When little Paula grows older, she is to begin the study of the psalms of David; these are to be her favorite songs. From the Proverbs of Solomon she is to glean rules of life; from Ecclesiastes she is to learn how to tread under foot all worldly things; from Job she will draw the examples of fortitude and patience. Then she will pass on to the Gospels, which will become the companions of her life. The Acts and the Epistles of St. Paul will form her will and heart. The Prophets, the Heptateuch and the Books of Kings and Chronicles, and the volumes of Esdras and Esther, must be committed to memory and enrich the storehouse of her mind. Lastly, she may safely read the Song of Songs--the song of the nuptials couched in fleshly language.[46]

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[42] Ibid.: "Ecclesiasticus . . . ruminat . . . et quodcumque latet in littera, in spiritu profert.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Comm. in Zach. 14.15 (PL 25.1610): "[Peccatores] videntur sibi sanctas scripturas legere . . . ruminantes eloquia divina, et ea quae scripta sunt negligentes."

[45] Antin, Le monachisme, p. 91.

Well did Jerome realize that Laeta could not carry out this program by herself. He admits she would be justified to raise the objection: "How shall I, a woman of the world living in crowded Rome, be able to follow all these instructions?"[47] He anticipates her difficulty by insisting that her little daughter be sent to Bethlehem, so that the grandmother and aunt, both saintly and experienced women, could take care of her ascetic education. "Let her be reared in a monastery and live in the midst of choirs of virgins," Jerome tells Laeta,[48] promising that he himself would be her tutor. The parents yielded and sent Paula to Bethlehem, where Jerome had the privilege of teaching "a handmaid and bride of Christ."[49]

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[46] _Ep_. 107.12 (_CSEL_ 55.302-303).

[47] _Ibid_., 13 (_CSEL_ 55.303).

[48] _Ibid_.: "Nutriatur in monasterio, sit inter virginum choros."

[49] _Ibid_. (_CSEL_ 55.305).

Some ten years later Jerome writes to Gaudentius on the education of his daughter Pacatula. The curriculum is much the same,[50] but more concessions are to be made to human nature. Rewards are to be promised her for singing the psalms aloud--some sweetmeat or bright flower, some glittering bauble or pretty doll. If she is rewarded for doing well in her studies, she will love what she is forced to do, accepting it not as a drudgery but a pleasure.[51]

Jerome lays down the rule that specific periods be assigned to scriptural study and reading. Young Paula must learn a fixed portion of the Scriptures and then repeat it to her mother; this assignment is to be done each day.[52] To Furia he gives the counsel: "Take a fixed number of lines from the Holy Scripture and show them up as your task to your Lord."[53] She must not lie down to rest until she has filled the basket of her heart with the precious yarn. He gives a similar advice to Demetrias: "Decide how many hours you will devote to the study of the Sacred Scriptures."[54]

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[50] Ep. 128.4 (CSEL 56.160).

[51] Ibid., 1 (CSEL 56.157).

[52] Ep. 107.9 (CSEL 55.300): "Reddat tibi pensum cotidie scripturarum certum."

[53] Ep. 54.11 (CSEL 54.478): "De scripturis sanctis habeto fixum versuum numerum; istud pensum domino tuo redde."

[54] Ep. 130.15 (CSEL 56.195).

6. Fruits of the Lectio

(a) Knowledge and Love of Christ

It was Jerome's firm conviction that thorough familiarity with the Holy Scriptures was the royal road to the knowledge and love of Christ. In fact, he did not hesitate to say: "Ignorance of the Scriptures means ignorance of Christ."[55] And he assures his monks of Bethlehem that they will know Christ, Who is "the power of God and the wisdom of God,"[56] if they acquire a deep knowledge of the Scriptures.[57] As he explains the mystical meaning of the Hebrew alphabet, he tells Paula that it is only through the knowledge of the Scriptures that we come to know Christ, Who is the life of all believers. Once we exclude this knowledge, there can be no other Christian life.[58]

In his study of the Scriptures Jerome applies everything he reads to Christ. To his monks he offers his own practice as an example to imitate: "This is the way I read the Law and the Prophets: not that I may abide in them, but that through them I may reach Christ."[59] In the knowledge of the Scriptures he finds the pearl of great price mentioned in the Gospel. Thus he writes in his Commentary on Matthew: "There is but one priceless pearl: the knowledge of the Savior, together with the mystery of His Passion and Resurrection."[60]

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[55] Comm. in Esaiam, Prologus (CC 73.1): "Ignoratio scripturarum, ignoratio Christi est."

[56] 1 Cor. 1.24.

[57] Tract. de Ps. 77 (CC 78.66): "Quoniam autem nescitis scripturas, propterea nescitis Christum, qui est Dei virtus et sapientis." See Comm. in Esaiam, Prologus (CC 73.1).

[58] Ep. 30.7 (CSEL 54.246).

(b) Love of the Church

From his love of Christ sprang Jerome's love for the Church, Christ's mystical Spouse.[61] He was ever strongly attached to the Chair of Peter, to the faith praised by the Apostle, and to the city of Rome where he received "the garment of Christ."[62] Commenting on the prophecy of Aggai (2.9) concerning the future glory of the new Temple, Jerome reflects on the far greater glory and beauty of "the Church of the living God, the pillar and mainstay of the truth."[63] This house of God is far richer than was the synagogue of old, for it is adorned with spiritual jewels: the silver of Sacred Scriptures, the gold of divine truth, and the precious gems of good works. Jerome points out the intimate union between Christ and His

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[59] Tract. in Marci Evangelium 9.1-7 (CC 78.484).

[60] Comm. in Matt. 13.45 (PL 26.98): "Unum autem est pretiosissimum nargaritum: scientia Salvatoris et sacramentum passionis illius et resurrectionis arcanum."

[61] See Comm. in Matt., Prologus (PL 26.17): "Ecclesia . . . quam introduxit rex in cubiculum suum." See Cant. 1.3.

[62] Ep. 15.1 (CSEL 54.63).

[63] Comm. in Aggaeum 2.1-10 (CSEL 25.1472). See 1 Tim. 3.15.

Church. Since the Head can never be separated from His Mystical Body, so too love of Christ must ever be associated with zeal for His Church.[64]

(c) Purity of Life

Jerome urges the virgin Demetrias to fill her mind with love for sacred reading.[65] Since the virgin cannot dispel evil thoughts by flight, let her so fill her mind with good thoughts, extracted from the Scriptures, that there will be no room for anything else. In vain will Satan attempt to sow cockle and wild oats in the good soil of her breast. Her mind will cleave to her Spouse and ever repeat with the bride of the Canticle: "At night I sought him whom my heart loves."[66]

Jerome assures Demetrias that such a soul will gradually learn what are the true riches: she will detach herself from the jewels and silk dresses and center her love on the sacred codices.[67] "Love the Holy Scriptures," he exhorts her, "and wisdom will love you. . . . Let the jewels on your breast and in your ears be the gems of wisdom."[68]

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[64] Ibid.

[65] Ep. 130.7 (CSEL 56.185): "Ut animum tuum sacrae lectionis amore occupes."

[66] Ibid. See Cant. 3.1.

[67] Ep. 130.7 (CSEL 56.186). See Ep. 107.12 (CSEL 55.302): "Pro gemmis aut serico divinos codices amet."

[68] Ibid., 20 (CSEL 56.201).

He instructs Rusticus that if he loves the knowledge of the Scriptures, he will not love the vices of the flesh.[69]

Immense was the spiritual profit Jerome derived from the _lectio divina_. From it came those interior illuminations in his exegetical labors; from it that love of prayer, of which he wrote so well; from it his ardent love for the Holy Eucharist;[70] from it, too, his love for Christ's Mother, whom he constantly set before the eyes of Christ's spouses as a model of all virtue.

In his Encyclical "Spiritus Paraclitus," commemorating the fifteenth centenary of the death of St. Jerome, Pope Benedict XV emphasizes the intense love of the Scriptures which the Saint exhibits in his whole life and teaching.[71] One sees how intensely this love glows in the words addressed to Paula: "What viands, what sweets can be tastier than the knowledge of God's wisdom: to penetrate into His secret designs, to discover the plans of the Creator, to learn the Lord's doctrines, so full of spiritual wisdom, yet despised by the wise of this world? Let others keep their wealth; let others drink out of jewelled cups, shine in silken clothes, enjoy the applause of the crowds and try in vain to exhaust their wealth on countless pleasures. Our delight must be to meditate on the law of the Lord day and night, to knock on doors that are still closed, to receive the gifts of the Trinity, and, following in the footsteps of Our Lord, to keep under our feet the waves of the world."[72]

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[69] _Ep_. 125.11 (_CSEL_ 56.130): "Ama scientiam scripturarum et carnis vitia non amabis."

[70] Cf. M. S. Weglewicz, _Doctrina S. Hieronymi de SS. Eucharistia_ (Rome, 1931).

[71] _AAS_ 12 (1920), 391.

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[72] _Ep_. 30.13 (_CSEL_ 54.248).

C. Works of Charity

The principal works of charity practiced or promoted either by Jerome or his disciples were the following: hospitality, care of the sick, preaching, and almsgiving.

1. Hospitality

In the description of the Last Judgment Christ strikingly expresses the mysterious identity between Himself and His followers. He considers as done for Himself what is done for the least of His brethren. "I was a stranger and you took me in."[1] Jerome reminds the monk Florentinus of this very truth, when he praises his many good works and especially his hospitality toward Heliodorus.[2]

Following Christ's teaching, St. Paul exhorts the Christians of Rome to the practice of hospitality.[3] He insists that hospitality must be one of the chief virtues of a bishop.[4] In his Commentary on Titus Jerome reiterates the Pauline teaching: "Above all hospitality is enjoined upon the future bishop." He adds that the bishop's house must be a hospice (hospitium) where everyone may seek assistance.[5]

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[1] Matt. 25.35. See Comm. in Esaiam 58.6-7 (CC 73A.667): "Peregrinus et duxistis me in domum vestram."

[2] Ep. 4.1 (CSEL 54.19). In the Chronicon (Helm, p. 248), Jerome records that Florentinus became known as "the father of the poor" (pater pauperum).

[3] Rom. 12.13.

[4] See 1 Tim. 3.2; Titus 1.8.

(a) Rome: Pammachius and Fabiola

Christian hospitality in the West gave rise to two kinds of institutions: hospitals and hospices. Hospitals were intended for invalids, lepers and other sufferers; hospices offered shelter and rest to travellers and pilgrims overcome by fatigue.[6]

At the close of the fourth century two of Jerome's disciples carried out heroic works of charity and hospitality at Rome. After the death of his wife Paulina in the year 396,[7] Senator Pammachius, the cousin of Marcella, began to serve Christ as an ascetic.[8] About two years later, he and Fabiola conceived a noble undertaking. Pooling their resources, they established a large hospice at the mouth of the Tiber. Here they relieved the misery of the destitute and offered hospitality to the many pilgrims who sailed to and from the port of Rome. Their generosity was at everyone's service; they provided even for those who possessed something themselves. Jerome writes: "The whole world learnt that a 'Hospice for Pilgrims' was erected at the Port of Rome."[9] Crowds of pilgrims flocked to the hospice; Christians from as far as Britain and Egypt found hospitality there.[10]

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[5] Comm. in Tit. 1.8 (PL 26.602): "Ante omnia hospitalitas futuro episcopo denuntiatur."

[6] See G. Bonet-Maury, "Hospitality (Christian)," ERE 6.804.

[7] See Cavallera, op. cit., 2.159; Ep. 77.1 (CSEL 55.37).

[8] Ep. 77.10 (CSEL 55.47): "Paulina . . . praecedit maritum, ut Christo famulum derelinquat."

(b) Bethlehem: Jerome and Paula

After their pious visit to Egypt, "the cradle of monachism," Jerome and Paula returned to Palestine and decided to settle down at Bethlehem. With Paula's help, Jerome built a monastery outside the town; it was completed in 389.[11] From his monastery he could see the Basilica of the Nativity,[12] adjacent to which Paula built her convent.[13] Along the main road was a third building--a hospice for pilgrims (diversorium peregrinorum), which was erected by Paula. Jerome remarks: "A hospice was built close by, so that, if Joseph and Mary chance to come to Bethlehem, they may not fail to find hospitality."[14]

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[9] *Ibid*.: "Xenodochium in portu Romano situm totus pariter mundus audivit." See Labourt, *op*. *cit*., 3.177, note 1: "Le *Portus* *Romanus* . . . (auj. Porto à l'est de Fiumicino), remplaçait pour les grands navires Ostie, presque ensablée." For a detailed description of the building see H. Grisar, *History of Rome and the Popes in the Middle Ages* (London, 1911), pp. 51-54.

[10] *Ep*. 77.10 (*CSEL* 55.47): "Ad hospitium turba concurrit. . . . Sub una aestate didicit Brittania, quod Aegyptus et Parthus agnoverant vere."

[11] See *Ep*. 66.14 (*CSEL* 54.665): "In ista provincia aedificato monasterio"; *Ep*. 108.20 (*CSEL* 55.334-5): "Post virorum monasterium, quod viris tradiderat gubernandum." For the date see Cavallera, *op*. *cit*., 1.127.

[12] See *Adv*. *Ioh*. *Hieros*. 22 (*PL* 23.411): "Ex quo tempore usque in praesentem diem videmus tantum specum Domini; et haereticis intrantibus, procul positi suspiramus."

Pilgrimages to the Holy Land had begun quite early. Jerome, for example, records that in the third century a certain Alexander and Firmilianus of Caesarea, both bishops of Cappadocia, made a journey to Palestine to visit the Holy Places.[15] But it was in the fourth century that the movement became widespread. The constant reading of the Sacred Scriptures aroused in the cultivated minds the desire to have direct contact with the places and events recorded in the Bible.[16] Jerome speaks of this desire to Domnion and Rogatianus: "We understand Holy Scripture better when we have seen Judea with our own eyes, and discovered what still remains of the ancient towns, and recognized their names, even when these have changed somewhat."[17]

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[13] See Ep. 108.20 (CSEL 55.335): "Die tantum dominico ad ecclesiam procedebant, ex cuius habitabant latere." See Cavallera, op. cit., 1.127, note 3.

[14] Ep. 66.14 (CSEL 54.665): "Diverserio propter extructo, ne forte et modo Ioseph cum Maria Bethlehem veniens non inveniat hospitium." See Ep. 108.14 (CSEL 55.325): "Quia Maria et Ioseph hospitium non invenerant."

[15] De viris inl. 62 and 54 (Richardson, p. 36 and p. 32).

[16] See P. de Labriolle, "Les débuts de monachisme," Fliche-Martin, Histoire de l'Eglise (Paris, 1950), 3.364.

In the case of Jerome the duty of hospitality often became a heavy burden. He tells Pammachius that his monastery and hospice were overwhelmed with crowds of monks and ascetics, who flocked there from all quarters of the world. However, no sacrifice could deter him from continuing "the service of hospitality toward the saints" (*sanctorum ministerium*). When he was in need of additional funds, he sent his brother Paulinianus ~~to~~ Stridon with instructions to sell the villas and properties he had inherited.[18] Besides the pilgrims, streams of exiles from the West began to pour into Bethlehem. Jerome's heart was tormented as news reached him that the Roman provinces were being overrun by the barbarians and that so many patrician families were reduced to misery. In his *Commentary on Ezechiel*, dedicated to Eustochium, he reflects with melancholy on their tragic plight. Rich men at the height of their power and prosperity have been plunged into destitution. Now they are without shelter, without food, without clothes. The large number of refugees so occupied Jerome's time, especially in the closing years of his life, that it was only at night that he could attend to his correspondence and scriptural writings.[19]

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[17] *Liber Paralip*. iuxta LXX, Praefatio (*Biblia Sacra* VII.7): "Sanctam Scripturam lucidius intuebitur qui Iudaeam oculis contemplatus est et antiquarum urbium memorias locorumque vel eadem vocabula vel mutata cognoverit."

[18] See *Ep*. 66.14 (*CSEL* 54.665).

2. Care of the Sick

Upon the death of her second consort, Fabiola astounded the high Roman society by presenting herself in sackcloth among public penitents at the Lateran basilica to expiate the sin of her second marriage.[20] After receiving absolution from Pope Siricius,[21] she began to devote her life and fortune to the care of the sick of Rome. She founded a public hospital (νοσοκόμιον)--the first of its kind in the West of which there is record[22]--to which she admitted the sick from the streets and alleys, and nursed their poor bodies worn out by sickness and hunger. Here the maimed, the blind, the diseased sought help and care. Jerome vividly describes Fabiola's zeal and charity. "How often did she carry on her own shoulders poor filthy wretches tortured by epilepsy! How often did she wash away the purulent matter from wounds which others could not even endure to look at! She served food to the sick with her own hands; even when the patient was but a breathing corpse, she would moisten his lips with drops of water." Using a Virgilian hyperbole Jerome remarks that it would require a hundred tongues to recount all the kinds of maladies that were treated at Fabiola's hospital.

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[19] *Comm. in Hiezech.*, Liber VII, Praefatio (*CC* 75.277).

[20] *Ep.* 77.4 (*CSEL* 55.40).

[21] See Labourt, *op. cit.*, 4.177.

[22] See H. Leclercq, "Hôpitaux, Hospices, Hôtelleries," *DACL* 6.2765.

Rome was not large enough for her zeal. She went from island to island in the Etruscan Sea, bestowing her bounty on the communities of monks (*monachorum chori*) who had sought solitude there.[23] As he looks back upon her life of penance and her works of public and private charity, Jerome extols Fabiola as "the glory of the Christians, the marvel of the pagans, the sorrow of the poor and the providence of the monks."[24]

3. Preaching

Every day Jerome commented on the Sacred Scriptures, particularly the psalms, for the benefit of his monks, as he himself asserts in his *Apologia* against Rufinus.[25] Very different from the impetuous Jerome is the Jerome of these homilies. With tenderness and constancy he exhorts his monks to virtues; he urges them to show themselves worthy of their profession and to renounce not only worldly pleasures, but also the spirit of bickering, which at times crops up in their midst.[26]

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[23] *Ep*. 77.6 (*CSEL* 55.43). Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.625-627.

[24] *Ep*. 77.2 (*CSEL* 55.37): "Fabiolam, laudem Christianorum, miraculum gentilium, luctum pauperum, solacium monachorum."

[25] *Adv*. *Ruf*. 2.24 (*PL* 23.468): "Quos [Septuaginta interpretes] quotidie in conventu fratrum edissero."

The preacher speaks frankly of their faults against fraternal charity. In his Homily on Psalm 119, he censures their quarrels. "We have left mothers, relatives, brothers, sisters; we have given up wives and children; we have left our homes; we have come into a monastery; all these things we have given up in order that in the monastery we may quarrel with our brothers over some silly trifling object! We have renounced the world, and in the monastery we quarrel over a reed pen!" In the same Homily he urges his monks to practice the spirit of forgiveness. "Let us plead with our brother, if he is our enemy; let us beg of him even twice, and three times, and seven times. What does the Lord say? If he sins seventy times seven times in a day and begs your pardon, forgive him. But you say: 'He is not sorry down deep in his heart; he is lying.' Let us leave that judgment to God; he implores me, he beseeches me; if he is not telling the truth, God knows. I hear the voice, Christ understands the heart; I accept what I hear, let Christ accept what He knows. Besides, think of the reward; he lies, you accept it as truth; it is death for him and salvation for you."[27]

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[26] See Penna, S. Gerolamo, p. 287; Tract. de Ps. 119 (CC 78.259).

4. Almsgiving

(a) Obligation

In the Sermon on the Mount Christ emphatically enforces the duty of almsgiving, which was one of the fundamental practices of Jewish asceticism.[28] "Give to everyone who asks of thee," Christ says. "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." That which He commanded He promoted by His example, for St. Peter declares that "He went about doing good and healing all who were in the power of the devil."[29] Writing to Furia, Jerome reechoes the teaching of Christ in His very words, adding St. Paul's advice to the Galatians: "Give, 'especially to those who are of the household of faith.'"[30]

(b) Motives

Repeatedly Jerome stresses the necessity of a right intention in almsgiving. Everytime they hold out their hand, he tells his disciples, they must think of Christ, for it is the Lord Himself who asks alms.[31] The same teaching he emphasizes to his monks, when he points out the essential difference between non-Christian and Christian almsgiving. "You who are in the house of the Lord . . . be sure that when you lift up your hands, you raise them toward the sanctuary, that is, that you acknowledge Christ, and that whatever you do, you do for Christ."[32]

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[27] Tract. de Ps. 119 (CC 78.258-259).

[28] See W. A. Spooner, "Charity, Almsgiving (Biblical)," ERE 3.380-381.

[29] Luke 6.30, 36; Acts 10.38.

[30] Ep. 54.12 (CSEL 54.478-479). See Gal. 6.10.

The beggar who asks for alms is not an unimportant person; he is a brother in Christ. So when we have the opportunity of giving, "we ought not to give as to a beggar, but as to a brother."[33]

Jerome constantly cautions his disciples against unworthy motives of almsgiving. Above all they must not give alms out of a desire for human praise or esteem. He tells his monks that unfortunately there are Christians who give alms in order to be honored by men. When a beggar comes up to them, such Christians first look all around and, unless they catch sight of a witness, they refuse to give anything. "You Christians!" Jerome exclaims. "A poor man begs you for money; why do you refuse him in secret, but give to him in public? If you seek God as your witness, why do you look around for human eyes?" Such an act of almsgiving, Jerome further explains, looks like a genuine act of charity in the presence of the unsophisticated, but in the presence of God it is a wrong." "In fact," he says, "it is an injury to your brother, for you wish to show him up as a beggar in the presence of others."[34]

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[31] _Ep_. 54.12 (_CSEL_ 54.479).

[32] _Tract_. _de_ _Ps_. 133 (_CC_ 78.287-288).

[33] _Ibid_. (_CC_ 78.288): "Non debemus dare quasi mendico, sed quasi fratri."

Neither should alms be given out of a desire for ostentation or self-aggrandizement. There are certain women, he tells Eustochium, who, when giving alms, want the world to know even their smallest contribution.[35] One such prominent lady in Rome, attended by her eunuchs, was dispensing charity with her own hands to the beggars at St. Peter's Basilica. And what was her generous alms? One denarius a piece! When one woman, conspicuous for her years and rags, attempted to get a second denarius, she received instead of a coin a blow with the fist. So great was her offense, that her blood had to be shed!

Giving alms out of pity for the needy is not enough. We must imitate the compassionate kindness of Christ. Jerome points out that even a pagan gives alms. When he sees an unfortunate person, his soul is overwhelmed by a natural sense of pity. He may reason thus: "If I were in his place, what would I do in such misery? Surely, I ought to give him alms, so that someone may give to me if ever I am in a similar state." True, this pagan gives bread to a pauper, but in the poor man he does not pity the pauper; he pities himself. This is not mercy, but rather his own feeling of self-pity.[36]

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Ep. 22.32 (CSEL 54.193): "Cum manum porrexerint, bucinant." See Matt. 6.2.

At times hypocrisy hides under the cloak of almsgiving. Jerome condemns the Christian who, under the pretext of reserving something for alms, crams his pockets with gold and clings to his former wealth.[37] Likewise he condemns the hypocrite, who, while reminding others of the duty of almsgiving, is rolling in riches like another Croesus, or, in spite of his threadbare coat is waging war against the moths to protect his silken robes.[38]

(c) Benefits

Among the special benefits which one can derive from almsgiving Jerome mentions atonement for sins. He instructs his monks that almsgiving atones for sins that one has not been able to wash away otherwise. To prove his point he quotes Sirach 3.29 and explains: "Just as water extinguishes a fire, so does almsgiving extinguish sin. The fires of hell have been kindled for sins; almsgiving quenches them." He compares the effects of almsgiving to those of baptism: "just as baptism remits sin, even so almsgiving atones for sins."[39]

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[36] Ibid. (CSEL 54.193-194).

[37] See Ep. 58.2 (CSEL 54.529): "Nos suffarcinati auro Christum pauperem sequimur et sub praetexto elemosynae pristinis opibus incubantes. . . ."

[38] Ep. 127.4 (CSEL 56.148): "Frustra lingua . . . docet elemosynas, qui Croesi divitiis tumet villique opertus palliolo pugnat contra tineas vestium sericarum."

Almsgiving procures for the almsgiver spiritual rewards. The poor man receives something material; in return, he gives something spiritual. Jerome explains: "We give him bread that will be consumed that same day; in return for the bread, he will give us the kingdom of heaven."[40] The almsgiver, therefore, should render thanks to the Lord, since the Lord has given him the material things that he can share with his brother. Jerome exhorts his monks: "When you give, thank Christ in greater measure than your brother thanks you. . . . You have given alms, you have performed virtuous deeds; from God you shall obtain a reward and a blessing."[41]

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[39] Tract. de Ps. 133 (CC 78.290): "Quomodo baptisma nobis peccata dimittit, ita et elemosina nobis peccata dimittit."

[40] Ibid. (CC 78.288).

[41] Ibid. (CC 78.289-290).

D. Prayer

In the Gospels Jesus teaches by precept and example that prayer is an essential part of the Christian life. "And I say to you, ask, and it shall be given to you. . . . For everyone who asks receives."[1] Two of His parables teach us that persevering prayer always obtains its object.[2] He often withdrew to the hills to be alone with His Father,[3] especially on the eve of grave decisions.[4]

The Apostles learned from Christ Himself how to pray.[5] In the cenacle they prepared themselves by prayer to receive the Holy Spirit;[6] after Pentecost, together with the first believers at Jerusalem they were assiduous in praying, in frequenting the Temple, and in praising God.[7] St. Paul, in turn, re-echoes the teaching of Christ on incessant prayer when he urges his converts: "Pray without ceasing."[8]

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[1] Luke 11.9-10; Matt.7.7-8.

[2] Luke 11.5-8; 18.1-5.

[3] Luke 9.18. See Matt. 14.23.

[4] For example, a night of prayer preceded the election of the Apostles (Mark 6.46) and the Transfiguration (Luke 9.28).

[5] Matt. 6.9; Luke 11.1-2.

[6] Acts 1.14.

[7] *Ibid*., 2.42, 46-47.

This ideal of ceaseless prayer looms large in ascetic circles from the outset. A glance at several passages in the Vita Antonii shows the important place that constant prayer occupies in asceticism. At first Anthony learned from his teachers in the ascetic life that one ought to pray in secret without ceasing;[9] later, he in turn gave the same advice to all the monks who came to him.[10]

Prayer was at all times one of the principal occupations of the ascetic; it became a task "properly his own."[11] Thus the Historia monachorum asserts: "The chief work of the monk is to offer pure prayer to God."[12] The teaching of Cassian is the same: "The aim of every monk and the perfection of his heart tends to continual and unbroken perseverance in prayer."[13] Speaking of the cenobites of Egypt,[14] Jerome tells Eustochium that once their daily labor is finished, they devote themselves to prayer and reading, which form their sole occupation on Sunday.[15] He too assigns to prayer a prominent place among the ascetic observances. Thus, the ascetic and monastic life is essentially a life of prayer; it may almost be said that the monk is the man of prayer *par excellence*.[16]

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[8] 1 Thess. 5.17.

[9] Vita Antonii 3 (PG 26.845).

[10] Ibid., 55 (PG 26.921).

[11] L. Bouyer, La spiritualité de Nouveau Testament et des Pères (Paris, 1960), p. 375: "Le moine s'applique à une tache nouvelle qui est proprement la sienne: la prière."

[12] Hist. monach. 1 (PL 21.397): "Monachi autem illud opus est praecipuum, ut orationem puram offerat Deo."

[13] Cassianus, Conl. 9.2 (CSEL 13.250): "Omnis monachi finis cordisque perfectio ad iugem atque indisruptam orationis perseverantiam tendit."

1. Concept of Prayer

Christians speak to God as to their Father. For in the Christian dispensation this is precisely the name of God, manifested to the world by His Son. "Father, I have revealed Thy name to men."[17] Jesus alone can call God "My Father" in the proper sense; those who unite themselves to Him share His power to do so through God's gift.[18] Commenting on the opening words of the Lord's Prayer, Jerome remarks: "By saying 'Father,' [Christians] profess themselves to be His sons."[19] Thus Christian prayer is based primarily on their divine sonship.

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[14] Jerome describes them as "those who live in common" (*coenobium in commune viventes*); *Ep*. 22.34 (*CSEL* 54.196).

[15] *Ibid*., 35 (*CSEL* 54.200).

[16] See G. M. Colombás, "El concepto de monje y vida monástica hasta fines del siglo V," *Studia Monastica* 1 (1959), 296: "La vida monástica es esencialmente vida da oración; el monje, casi podríamos decir, el hombre de oración por excelencia."

[17] *Tract*. *de Ps*. 74 (*CC* 78.48): "Nomen Dei Pater est: antea enim ignorabatur. Dicit enim Dominus: 'Pater, revelavi nomen tuum hominibus'"; *Comm*. *in Hier*. 16.21 (CC 74.616); *Comm*. *in Habacuc* 3.1-3 (*PL* 25.1373). See John 17.5-6.

[18] See R. E. Brown, "Pater Noster as Eschatological Prayer," *TS* 22 (1961), 183.

Jerome calls prayer a lifting up of the soul to God. He exhorts Paulinus: "Pray often; often bow down your body, but lift up your mind to the Lord."[20] However, Jerome's favorite definition of prayer is movingly expressed in his letter to Eustochium: "When you pray," he tells her, "you are speaking to your Bridegroom."[21] Thus he considers prayer a direct and intimate conversation between Christ and the ascetic.[22]

2. Continuous Prayer

In his writings Jerome frequently insists on the continuity of prayer especially for the ascetic. He should imitate those whom God placed as watchmen and teachers over His Church and exhorted never to let prayer die on their lips.[23] To his spiritual daughters Jerome prescribed nocturnal prayer. "Be a grasshopper of the night," he tells Eustochium, inviting her to chant the praises of God even at night.[24] Some of his disciples observed the practice of continuous prayer in an heroic manner. He points out, for example, that Lea passed sleepless nights in prayer,[25] and that Asella's knees became hardened like those of a camel from the frequency of her prayers.[26] He praises Eustochium as a model of this practice; "prayer is her favorite pastime," he tells Furia.[27] Echoing the exhortation of the Apostle to the Ephesians, Jerome writes: "He bids us to pray at all times. For the saints even sleep is a prayer."[28]

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[19] *Comm. in Matt.* 6.9 (*PL* 26.44).

[20] *Ep.* 58.6 (*CSEL* 54.535): "Frequenter orandum et flexo corpore mens erigenda ad Dominum."

[21] *Ep.* 22.25 (*CSEL* 54.178): "Oras: loqueris ad sponsum." Cf. also Augustine (*Enarr. in Ps.* 85.7 [*CC* 39.1162]), "Oratio tua locutio est ad Deum . . . quando oras, Deo loqueris."

[22] This concept of prayer occurs also in Gregory of Nyssa (*De oratione dominica* 1 [*PG* 44.1124]: προσευχη θεοῦ ὁμιλία) and St. John Chrysostom (*Hom. in Gen.* 30 [PG 55.280]: ἡ διάλεξίς ἐστι πρὸς τὸν θεόν.

Jerome urges Eustochium to rise two or three times at night and to meditate on the passages of Scripture which she knows by heart.[29] He instructs Laeta to keep her young daughter occupied the whole day "in such a manner that reading follows prayer and prayer follows reading."[30]

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[23] *Comm. in Esaiam* 62.6-7 (*CC* 73.716): "O vos qui recordamini Domini . . . cavete ne umquam in ore vestro sileat oratio."

[24] *Ep*. 22.18 (*CSEL* 54.166-167): "Esto cicada noctium. . . . Vigila et fiere sicut passer in solitudine." See Ps. 101.8. Cf. P. Antin, "La cigale dans la spiritualité," *RAM* 37 (1961), 486-492.

[25] *Ep*. 23.2 (*CSEL* 54.212).

[26] *Ep*. 24.5 (*CSEL* 54.216-217).

[27] *Ep*. 54.13 (*CSEL* 54.480).

[28] *Ep*. 22.37 (*CSEL* 54.201). See Eph. 6.18.

[29] *Ibid*.

All the daily actions of the ascetic--even indifferent ones--should be united with prayer. Prayer should precede and follow his meals; prayer should fortify him when he leaves his lodging; prayer should be said upon his return from town; prayer should feed his soul before his poor body takes its nightly rest. And Jerome adds: "At every action, at every step, the hand should make the sign of the cross."[31]

To devote oneself to praising God assiduously is, in the words of Jerome, to practice what the saints will do in heaven together with the angels.[32] Elsewhere he writes: "What the angels do in heaven the monks do on earth," that is, sing praises to the Lord day and night.[33]

3. Efficacy of Prayer

The effectiveness of Christian prayer is based on union with Christ, for He assures us: "Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, He will give it to you."[34] Prayer must be made in the name of Jesus, that is, in union with Him. Then it cannot remain unheard.

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[30] Ep. 107.9 (CSEL 55.300): "Orationi lectio, lectioni succedat oratio."

[31] Ep. 22.37 (CSEL 54.201-202): "Ad omnem actum, ad omnem incessum manus pingat crucem."

[32] Comm. in Esaiam 51.1-3 (CC 73.559).

[33] Tract. de Ps. 115 (CC 78.245).

Furthermore, to be efficacious prayer must meet certain conditions. Commenting on the exhortation of Christ: "Ask, and it shall be given you," Jerome writes: "He who does not receive, apparently did not ask properly."[35] Elsewhere Jerome reflects that whenever we pray and do not receive, the fault lies not in the one who bestows, but in the one who prays.[36] To his monks he recalls the reason given by St. James why our prayer is not heard: "You ask and are not heard, because you ask indifferently."[37]

(a) Faith

Christ promised to grant us the favors we beg of Him, on condition that we ask with faith, that is, with confidence. "Therefore I say to you, all things whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come to you."[38] St. James repeats Christ's teaching: "But if any one of you is wanting in wisdom, let him ask it of God . . . and it will be given to him. But let him ask with faith, without hesitation."[39]

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[34] John 16.23.

[35] Comm. in Matt. 7.7-10 (PL 26.48).

[36] Ibid., 17.18-19 (PL 26.130): "Quoties non accipimus, non praestantis est impossibilitas, sed culpa deprecantium."

[37] Tract. de Ps. 119 (CC 78.251): "Petitis, inquit, et non exaudimini, quia neglegenter petitis." See James 4.3.

Recalling the teaching of Christ on prayer, Jerome remarks that a Christian who prays should not imitate the wordiness of the pagans or the Jews, but should adore the Lord with the brevity of faith.[40]

(b) Perseverance

Jerome points to the prayer of the Canaanite woman as a wonderful example of confident, persevering and humble prayer. Christ Himself praised her prayer: "O woman, great is thy faith!" Great was her faith, perseverance, and humility. Great was her faith, for she steadfastly believed that Christ possessed the power to heal her daughter; great was her perseverance, for Christ's repeated rebuffs failed to make her lose heart; great was her humility, for she acknowledged herself unworthy of

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[38] Mark 11. 24.

[39] James 1.5-6.

[40] Comm. in Esaiam 32.17 (CC 73.410): "Ut non multiloquio Iudaeorum, sed brevitate fidei adorent Dominum"; cf. Comm. in Matt. 6.7-8 (PL 26.43).

Christ's special favors.[41]

4. Liturgical Prayer

If the practice of private prayer is important, liturgical prayer is no less important in the life of the ascetic. Addressing his brethren at Bethlehem, Jerome reminds them that the monk is God's harpist, the singer of the glories of the Almighty. He exclaims: "O monk! You are standing there in body: Why is your soul listless, why are you not chanting praises to the Lord?" Echoing the warning of Jeremia: "Cursed be he who does the Lord's work remissly," he insists: "If you are a psaltery, if you are a harp, why are you so mute and not glorifying God?"[42]

This divine praise of the ascetic must be like an echo of the angelic praise, which is perfect praise. Therefore the concern of the monk must consist in imitating the glorious chant of the angels. "By singing the praises of the Lord," he tells Principia, "you will imitate the angelic choirs."[43]

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[41] Comm. in Matt. 15.25-26 (PL 26.114): "Fides, qua credidit sanari posse filiam suam. Patientia, qua toties contempta, in precibus perseverat. Humilitas, qua se non canibus, sed catulis comparat."

[42] Tract. de Ps. 107 (CC 78.202). See Jer. 48.10.

[43] Ep. 65.14 (CSEL 54.635): "Laudes Domino canes . . . angelorum imitaberis choros."

To his disciples Jerome repeats the Apostle's injunction to pray without ceasing. Nonetheless they are to have "appointed hours for praying."[44] His reason is that if by chance they are detained by some business, "the time itself may remind them of their duty."[45] He follows the Christian custom of prayer at the third, sixth and ninth hours.[46] These three hours of prayer are in addition to the basic hours of the beginning of the day and of the night, indicated in his letter to Eustochium.[47] In the Epitaphium Paulae, written in 404, he makes mention of a sixth hour, namely, the midnight hour of prayer.[48] In the case of a Roman lady like Paula or Marcella, the recitation of psalms at these hours was a private exercise. It was in the seclusion of her mother's house that the daughter of Laeta had to chant the psalms along with her virgo veterana.[49]

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[44] Ep. 22.37 (CSEL 54.201).

[45] Ibid.: "Ipsum ad officium tempus admoneat."

[46] Ibid.: "Horam tertiam, sextam, nonam . . . nemo qui nesciat." Cf. D. Y. Hadidian, "The Background and Origin of the Christian Hours of Prayer," TS 25 (1964), 59-69.

[47] Ep. 22.37 (CSEL 54.201): "Diluculum quoque et vesperam." Also, Ep. 130.15 (CSEL 55.195): "Ad vesperum . . . et mane."

[48] Ep. 108.20 (CSEL 55.335). Also, Ep. 130.15 (CSEL 56.195).

[49] Ep. 107.9 (CSEL 55.300).

Around Marcella there were gathered in her house on the Aventine several ladies of rank, both young maidens and widows, who shared her interest in the study of the Scriptures and her desire for a life of retirement. For their benefit Jerome periodically gave biblical lectures and prescribed a regular schedule of prayer based on the Psalms. Thus they united in prayer and in psalmody at dawn, terce, sext, none and evening.[50] Later the monasteries at Bethlehem, founded by Paula and Jerome, followed the same schedule of prayer and psalmody. However, they adopted one important change: the monks and the virgins assembled also at the midnight hour in their separate oratories. In one of his homilies Jerome refers to the various hours of prayer observed at the Bethlehem monastery. "We pray at the third hour, at the sixth, at the ninth; we say vespers at sunset; we rise in the middle of the night; then we pray again at cock-crow. How constantly we are being roused to the devout services of God!"[51]

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[50] See notes 47 and 48 above.

[51] Tract. de Ps. 119 (CC 78.257). See also Ep. 108.20 (CSEL 55.335): "Mane, hora tertia, sexta, nona, vespera, noctis medio per ordinem Psalterium canebant." Jerome urges Demetrias to adopt the same practice; Ep. 130.15 (CSEL 56.195): "Praeter psalmorum et orationis ordinem, quod tibi hora tertia, sexta, nona, ad vesperum, medio noctis et mane semper est exercendum."

5. Jerome's Prayer to Jesus

Prayer to Jesus forms one of the important elements in Jerome's personal piety.[52] Already at the time of his eremitical life at Chalcis, he had frequent recourse to Christ in moments of depression, temptation, and remorse. How moving is his account of the inner conflicts which his soul experienced in that endless solitude![53] At times he would go out alone into some deep valley, or some rugged mountain, and make it his place of prayer. In that state of dejection and helplessness, he tells Eustochium, "he used to lie at Jesus' feet and bathe them with his tears."[54]

He has recourse to Christ in temporal and spiritual needs and anxieties. It is to Christ he addresses his petition of health and well-being for his friends;[55] it is Christ Who will grant him the same blessings through the prayers of others;[56] it is Christ Who will hold back the barbaric hordes of Huns from invading the Roman Empire.[57] Many of his letters close with various formulas of petition to Christ.[58] His letter to the Spanish lady Theodora concludes with the prayerful wish: "May you be kept holy in body and in spirit by that Samaritan, Whom the Psalmist calls 'the guardian of Israel.'"[59] Numerous are the appeals he directs to his correspondents to remember him to the "Lord Jesus" and to ask blessings in his behalf.[60] It is the "mercy of Christ" (clementia Christi) which will grant these requests.[61]

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[52] See K. Baus, "Das Gebet zu Christus beim hl. Hieronymus," Trierer Theolog. Zeitschrift 60 (1951), 178-181.

[53] Ep. 22.7 (CSEL 54.152-154).

[54] Ibid.: "Itaque omni auxilio destitutus ad Iesu iacebam pedes, rigabam lacrimis."

[55] See Ep. 138 (CSEL 56.266): "Incolumen te [Riparium] . . . Christus, Dominus noster, tueatur omnipotens."

[56] Ep. 74.6 (CSEL 55.28): "Ora nobis a Domino sospitatem." He attributes his recovery from serious illness to the prayers of Eustochium; see Comm. in Esaiam, Liber XIV, Prologus (CC 73.552).

Jerome hopes for help from his prayer to Christ particularly when he wants to explain the words of Sacred Scripture. When he is about to comment on Isaia's vision of the seraphim, he invites Pope Damasus to join him in prayer to the Lord that he may receive the grace to contemplate the divine mysteries and to tell what he has seen.[62] Referring to the obscurity of the Book of Osee, he points out that prayer is greatly needed for a correct understanding of the prophet. He turns to Christ and invokes His assistance in the words of St. Peter: "Explain to us this parable."[63] In the prologue to the sixth book of the Commentary on Jeremia, he asks Eusebius for the same prayerful help: "My dear brother Eusebius, beg our Lord Jesus Christ that we may be able to expound the prophet."[64] It is Jerome's deep conviction that he will produce proper interpretations of the Holy Scriptures only if Christ grants him the necessary illumination, inspiration, and grace.[65]

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[57] Ep. 77.8 (CSEL 55.45): "Avertat Iesus ab orbe Romano tales ultra bestias."

[58] See Ep. 103.2 (CSEL 55.238); Ep. 115.3 (CSEL 56.396-397); Ep. 126.3 (CSEL 56.145).

[59] Ep. 75.5 (CSEL 54.34): "Sanctam te et corpore et spiritu servet ille Samarita . . . de quo in psalmo scribitur . . . 'qui custodit Israel.'" See John 8.48; Ps. 120.4.

[60] See e.g., Ep. 30.14 (CSEL 54.249); Comm. in Esaiam, Liber XIV, Prologus (CC 73.552). In the Epitaphium Paulae (Ep. 108.8, CSEL 55.350), Jerome entreats the saint to continue helping him by her prayers to Christ.

[61] See e.g., Ep. 151.3 (CSEL 56.364); Ep. 152 (CSEL 56.365).

6. Union with Jesus

For Jerome ascetical life is a spiritual search--a search after Jesus. This search is continuous; even after the soul finds the Saviour, she must constantly follow Him. In order to cling to Him more perfectly, she must forget her people and her father's house, and abide with Him alone.[66] Before finding Jesus, the soul is weak and inconstant; once He is found, the soul, now strong and brave, continually grows in perfection.[67] She clings to Him, saying with the bride of the Canticle: "I found him whom my heart loves. I took hold of him and would not let him go."[68] This is the prayer that will ever rise to the lips of the soul that has found her crucified Lord.[69]

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[62] *Ep*. 18A.6 (*CSEL* 54.80).

[63] *Comm*. *in* *Oseam*, Prologus (*PL* 25.855). See Matt. 13.36.

[64] *Comm*. *in* *Hier*. Liber VI, Prologus (*CC* 74.290).

[65] See e.g., *Ep*. 65.22 (*CSEL* 54.646): "Domino revelante"; *Ep*. 112.2 (*CSEL* 55.369): "Si Christus iusserit"; *Ep*. 133.13 (*CSEL* 56.259): "Si Dominus gratiam dederit."

To illustrate the progress and ascent of the ascetic in the spiritual life, Jerome avails himself of a symbol borrowed from Genesis. "Jacob saw there a ladder (scalam) set up on the ground with its top reaching to heaven; and in heaven the Lord leaning upon it. And he saw angels ascending and descending."[70] Other writers in Jerome's time made use of the symbol of Jacob's ladder.[71] The passage of Genesis no doubt was present in the mind of St. Orsisius when he exhorted his brethren to consider the traditions of their common father. St. Pachomius, as a ladder that leads to the kingdom of heaven.[72] To Gregory of Nyssa Jacob's ladder signifies the progress of the soul on the path leading to the contemplation of God.[73] In his letters Jerome makes several allusions to Jacob's ladder.[74] According to him it consists of fifteen rungs,[75] symbolizing the virtues which guide the ascetic step by step to the heights of heaven.[76] In one of his conferences to the monks of Bethlehem, he explains the symbolism of the first two rungs and of the highest one. "Would you know what these steps are? I think the first step is fasting, for it is still quite close to earth. . . . The second step is the true renouncement of the world." The topmost rung symbolizes martyrdom. "Happy the martyrs," Jerome exclaims, "of whom many merited to ascend from the last step to the very top!"[77]

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[66] See Comm. in Is. 21.11-12 (CC 78.295): "Ad quam loquitur Deus: Si vere me quaeris, opere ostende quod me quaeras; nec semel tibi quaesisse sufficiat; sed quem inveneris, semper inquire; et ut perfectius teneas, obliviscere populi tui et domus patris tui, et . . . apud me in Ecclesia commorare." See Ps. 44.11

[67] Tract. de Ps. 104 (CC 78.189).

[68] Ep. 46.13 (CSEL 54.344). See Cant. 3.4.

[69] Tract. de Ps. 115 (CC 78.245).

[70] Gen. 28.12-13. Here Jerome follows the Septuagint text.

[71] See E. Bertaud and A. Rayez, "Echelle Spirituelle," DSp 4.66-67.

Jerome admits that it is very difficult to ascend from earth to heaven. To climb upwards, he insists, requires severe effort and a great deal of sweat. The man on the lowest step should not lose courage of reaching the top, nor should the man on the top yield to a complacent security, for it is possible for him to fall all the way to the bottom.[78] However, the athlete of Christ (*athleta Christi*) must not give up hope, though the climb is arduous, difficult, and even engendering despair. At each step he must beg God for help. "Do not lose confidence," Jerome tells his monks, "If you are on the first step, and the passage between the first and the fifteenth seems insurmountable, do not look at the steps, but look up at the Lord. . . . Attend to what the Scripture says: 'Jacob saw Him leaning over the ladder.' Just realize what that means: from where He was standing, He stooped down and lowered Himself that we might ascend. The Lord stooped down; for your sake He humbled Himself. Climb up, therefore, with safety and confidence."[79]

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[72] *Liber Patris nostri Orsiesii* 22 (ed. A. Boon, *Pachomiana Latina* (Louvain, 1932), p. 123. See G. M. Colombás, *Paraíso y vida angélica* (Montserrat, 1958), pp. 99-100.

[73] *Vita Moysis* II (ed. H. Musurillo, in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* 7.1 (Leiden, 1964), p. 113.

[74] See e.g., *Ep*. 3.4 (*CSEL* 54.15): "Bonosus tuus. . . scalam praesagatam Iacob somniante iam scandit"; *Ep*. 18A.14 (*CSEL* 54.91-92); *Ep*. 22.4 (*CSEL* 54.149); *Ep*. 98.3 (*CSEL* 55.186); *Ep*. 118.7 (*CSEL* 55.444); *Ep*. 123.14 (*CSEL* 56.90).

[75] *Tract*. *de Ps*. 119 (*CC* 78.249): "Fac mihi istam scalam quindecim habere gradus."

[76] See *Ep*. 99.3 (*CSEL* 55.186).

[77] *Tract*. *de Ps*. 119 (*CC* 78.241-249).

For Jerome the goal of the ascetic life is a life of intimate union with Jesus. Pointing to the virgin Asella as "the pattern of the perfect life" (*perfectae vitae normam*), he singles out her constant communion with her Bridegroom in prayer and in psalmody.[80] To young Demetrias he expresses the wish that her tongue may know no other theme but Christ.[81] And it is to his beloved disciple Eustochium that he directs the mystic exhortation: "Be you also another Mary. Prefer wisdom to food. . . . Do you, who have once for all cast away this world's burden, sit at the Lord's feet and say: 'I have found Him whom my soul was seeking; I shall hold Him, and I will not let Him go.'"[82] Union with Jesus is the goal toward which Jerome earnestly guides ascetic souls. "Happy the soul," he exclaims, "happy the virgin in whose heart there is room for no other love than the love of Christ!"[83]

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[78] *Ibid*. See *Ep*. 123.14 (*CSEL* 56.90).

[79] *Tract*. *de* *Ps*. 119 (*CC* 78.250).

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[80] Ep. 24.4 (CSEL 54.216): "Sponso aut orans loquebatur aut psallens."

[81] Ep. 130.20 (CSEL 56.201): "Nihil aliud noverit lingua nisi Christum."

[82] Ep. 22.24 (CSEL 54.178).

[83] Ep. 130.19 (CSEL 56.201): "Felix illa conscientia et beata virginitas, in cuius corde praeter amorem Christi . . . nullus alius versatur amor."

CHAPTER V

RETROSPECT AND SUMMARY

I. Dogmatic Basis of Jerome's Ascetical Doctrine

It is generally held by patristic scholars that Jerome was not interested in questions of speculative theology.[1] Admittedly he is not a theologian, one, for example, who can be compared with St. Augustine.[2] "In general," remarks Cavallera, "Jerome was intent upon exactitude and precision in expressing common theological doctrines."[3] We must add, however, that it can be definitely proved that Jerome lays down sound theological principles, which serve as a foundation for his ascetical teaching.

1. Essential Goodness of Human Natsre

The natural, essential goodness of human nature was affirmed by Jerome. "The Lord created us good," he instructs his monks of Bethlehem.[4] In his letter to Ctesiphon, he defends himself against the charge of Manicheanism; at one point he asserts: "From me you will never hear that nature is evil."[5] Here we have Jerome's general principle that human nature is free of any intrinsic corruption. If men sin, they do so not because of their evil nature, but because of their own free will.[6]

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[1] See, e.g., H. von Campenhausen, Men Who Shaped the Western Church (New York, 1964), p. 144; B. Altaner, Patrology (New York, 1960), p. 473: "Jerome had neither the inclination nor the gifts to become a speculative theologian."

[2] See Penna, op. cit., p. 403: "Parlare di teologia di Gerolamo, come si può parlare di teologia di Agostino o dell' Aquinate, sarebbe un controsenso."

[3] F. Cavallera, "The Personality of St. Jerome," A Monument to St. Jerome (New York, 1952), p. 16.

Against the Pelagians Jerome maintains that during life we are subject to sin, but our condition results "not because of any defect of nature or creation, . . . but because of the weakness and changeableness of the human will, that changes from moment to moment."[7] Thus sin proceeds from man's free will and not from some defect of human nature.

Statements can be found in Jerome's writings which undoubtedly prove that he admitted that pagans and sinners can perform naturally good works. As to the pagans, he teaches that they can perform naturally good works without faith. In his Commentary on the Galatians, he writes: "Many who are without faith and without the Gospel of Christ (absque fide et evangelio Christi), yet perform prudent and good actions, as for example, obeying their parents, helping the needy, not oppressing their neighbors, not appropriating the property of others."[8] Speaking of the reward which Yahweh gave to Nebuchadnezzar for his services against Tyre, Jerome observes that the fact that the king of Babylon received a reward for a good work teaches us that even the pagans (ethnicos) do not go unrewarded, when they have performed a good deed.[9] Such good actions of unbelievers, however, according to Jerome, possess no value at all for meriting a supernatural reward.[10]

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[4] *Tract de Ps*. 114 (*CC* 78.237): "Deus enim nos bonos creavit."

[5] *Ep*. 133.9 (*CSEL* 56.254): "A me numquam audies malam esse naturam."

[6] See, e.g., *Adv*. *Pelag*. 2.26 (*PL* 23.591-592): "Singulos enim insidiari amicis et fratrem a fratre decipi et hoc facere non naturae malo, sed propria voluntate."

[7] *Adv*. *Pelag.* 2.30 (*PL* 23.596): "Necesse est nos subiacere peccato, non naturae et conditionis . . . vitio, sed fragilitate et commutatione voluntatis humanae, quae per momenta variatur."

As to the sinners, Jerome clearly asserts: "There's no murderer, no parricide, no poisoner, however corrupt, who has not performed some good work at one time or other."[11]

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[8] Comm. in Galatas 1.15 (PL 26.351).

[9] Comm. in Ezech. 29.17-21 (CC 75.416).

[10] Comm. in Zach. 8.11-12 (PL 25.1542): "Priusquam fidem Christi quis recipiat . . . nullus audire poterit, est merces operi tuo. Sive ille Iudaeus sit, sive haereticus, sive gentilis, quidquid boni operis fecerit, nisi in nomine Christi fecerit, mercedem sui bono operis non habebit."

[11] Comm. in Titum 1.12-14 (PL 26.609): "Nemo est tam sicarius et tam parricida, tam veneficus, qui non aliquid boni aliquando fecerit."

2. Necessity of Grace

a. For the avoidance of sin

Jerome demonstrates at length that the human will without the aid of divine grace is incapable of avoiding sin. In his Dialogue against the Pelagians, he adduces several scriptural texts which Catholic tradition employs to prove the necessity of grace, e.g., John 6.44; *id*., 15.5; Rom. 9.16, 1 Cor. 3.6-10; 2 Cor. 3.4-6.[12]

Unless man is aided by Christ, he is incapable of overcoming all the grievous temptations to sin. Thus in his *Commentary on Jona*, Jerome asserts: "There is no one who can conquer all temptations without the aid of Him Who was tried in all things as we are except sin."[13] The main proof, however, Jerome adduces from universal experience.[14] In that same context he cites the experience of St. Paul, the Apostles, the Prophets, and the Patriarchs.[15] He even refers to his own personal experience: "Yet, to lay bare my own weakness, I know that I wish to do many things which I ought to do and yet cannot. For while my spirit is strong and leads me to life, my flesh is weak and draws me to death. And I have the warning of the Lord in my ears: 'Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.'"[16]

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[12] See J. Fahey, *Doctrina Sancti Hieronymi de gratiae divinae necessitate* (Mundelein, 1937), p. 31. In some passages Jerome seems not to realize the necessity of prevenient grace (e.g., *Adv. Pelag*. 3.1, *PL* 23.596: "Nostrum [est] incipere, illius [Dei] perficere"); but in other passages he states that our will, too, is supported by divine grace. For a full treatment of this problem see Fahey, *ibid*., pp. 50-59.

[13] *Comm. in Ionam* 2.4 (*SChr* 43.82-83): "Nullusque est hominum qui cunctas sustinere queat temptationes absque eo qui temptatus est in omnibus, iuxta nostram similutudinem sine peccato." See Hebr. 4.15.

[14] See Fahey, *op. cit*., p. 36.

[15] *Ibid*.

a. For the performance of good works

Though faith in Christ is a fundamental virtue for Christian life, still by itself it is not sufficient. In his *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, Jerome teaches that it is not enough that a tree should grow and blossom without bearing any fruit; similarly, it is not enough to profess oneself a Christian without having Christ in one's works, that is, without keeping His commandments.[17] In his treatise against Jovinian he discusses also the necessity of good works.[18] But for the performance of these works he emphatically teaches the necessity of grace. At times he expresses this necessity in a general way. For example, in his treatise against the Pelagians, he appeals to the teaching of St. Paul, citing 1 Cor. 4:7 ("Or what hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received it, why dost thou boast as if thou hadst not received it?") and 2 Cor. 3:5 ("Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything, as from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God").[19] At other times he adduces concrete proofs. For example, in his Commentary on Jeremia he clearly states: "It is in our power to do a thing or not to do it. However, whatever good work we will or desire or perform, we must attribute it to the grace of God, Who, according to the Apostle, gave us the power both to will and to perform."[20]

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[16] *Ep.* 133.9 (*CSEL* 56.256). See Matt. 26.51.

[17] *Comm. in Apocalypsin* (*CSEL* 49.41): "Non enim satis est arborem vivere et virere et fructum non habere: sic nec satis est Christianum dici et ipsum confiteri et Christum in opere non habere, id est eius praecepta non facere."

[18] See, e.g., *Adv. Iovin.* 1.11 (*PL* 23.236).

II. Champion of the Chaste Life

Jerome waged a constant and fearless campaign against the sensuality of his time. There is hardly an ascetic letter, especially among those addressed to women, in which he does not sound a warning against this vice or extol his favorite virtue.[21] Some of his most important works--for example, Adversus Helvidium, De virginitate servanda, Adversus Iovinianum--are devoted almost exclusively to the defense of virginity and chastity. With good reason, therefore, he merits to be hailed as the champion of the chaste life.

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[19] Adv. Pelag. 1.27 (PL 23.543); ibid., 2.9 (PL 23.569).

[20] Comm. in Hier. 26.4-6 (CC 74.254). See Philip, 2.13.

[21] See Mitzka, op. cit., pp. 178-179.

Jerome's most complete work in defense of asceticism is no doubt the Adversus Iovinianum. Unfortunately, however, it betrays Jerome's weakness: his tendency to exaggerate the necessity of virginity. This attitude can be perceived in his correspondence: for among his many ascetic letters not even one can be found addressed to married persons or praising their virtues after death.[22] Hence as most authors would admit, it is difficult to direct young Christian spouses to Jerome as an ascetic guide in their married life;[23] for in all his writings on the subject only one voice seems to be heard: For the unmarried it is much better to persevere in virginity; for the widowed it is almost an obligation not to remarry.

Jerome's last chapter of the first book of the Adversus Iovinianum is partly a plea for chastity in marriage. "A wise man," he remarks, "should love his wife with judgment, not with passion, for nothing is more detestable (foedius) than to love one's wife as if she were an adulteress."[24] Addressing himself directly to the Christian wives, he extols chastity as the virtue that holds the primacy (principatus) among all the virtues of a woman. And he adds: "It is this virtue that makes up for a wife's property, enhances her riches, redeems her deformity, and gives grace to her beauty."[25]

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[22] In Ep. 66 Jerome dwells but little on the life of Paulina, the wife of Pammachius. The greater part of the letter is taken up with the praise and encouragement of her widowed husband who embraced the ascetic life.

[23] See Penna, op. cit., p. 423; yet Penna would seem to exaggerate when he asserts that it would be "entirely useless" (perfettamente inutile) for young Christian couples to turn to Jerome for ascetic guidance.

Admittedly Jerome, unlike Ambrose,[26] does not deal with many of the positive things which could be said about the married state. There is no doubt, however, that, faithful to the Christian tradition, he praises marriage, stresses the unity of husband and wife, and exhorts spouses to maintain mutual love.[27] Yet as the champion of the chaste life, Jerome has rendered an inestimable service to his contemporaries and to future generations. He has guided a large number of souls to a pure and dedicated life for God; he has enkindled and promoted in the widest circles a greater esteem for chastity, which occupied the central place in his asceticism.[28]

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[24] Adv. Iovin. 1.49 (PL 23.293-294).

[25] Ibid. (PL 23.294).

[26] See W. J. Dooley, Marriage According to St. Ambrose, Catholic Univ. Studies in Christian Antiquity II (Washington, 1948).

[27] See, for example, Comm. in Ephesios 5.31 (PL 26.568): "Ad exhortationem mutui affectus inter uxorem et virum, [Paulus] Adam et Evae sumpsit exemplum. ...qui uxorem diligit, seipsum diligit, sic et nos nostras amemus uxores."

[28] See Mitzka, op. cit., p. 180; Penna, op. cit., p. 429.

III. Source of Jerome's Ascetical Doctrine

At first it may perhaps cause surprise that, being a spiritual director of numerous ascetics and superior of a monastery at Bethlehem, Jerome has not handed down a written rule, as did Pachomius, Basil, and others. The reason lies in the fact that he considered the Bible as his rule *par excellence*, the supreme norm of the ascetical life.[29] This then is the principal source of Jerome's ascetical doctrine: the study and meditation of Holy Scripture.[30] Hieronymian asceticism is fundamentally biblical. In all his ascetic rules of conduct, he seeks the support of the Bible. Seldom does he argue from the authority of another teacher; still less does he have recourse to proofs from reason. Everything he resolves by the word of God.[31] His whole ascetical life revolved around the Sacred Book. In the beautiful words penned to Eustochium we see depicted the scriptural scholar himself: "Let sleep creep upon you as you hold the [sacred] codex (*codicem*) in your hand; let the sacred page (*pagina sancta*) catch your drooping face."[32]

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[29] See J. Bonjorn, "Biblia y monacato en San Jerónimo," *Collectanea Ord. Cisterciensium Ref.* 22 (1960), 257-258.

[30] See P. Antin, "Saint Jérôme," *Théologie* 49 (1961), 192: "En premier lieu, sans doute, réflexion sur la Bible." According to Antin (*ibid.*, pp. 192-194), Origen had a marked influence on Jerome's asceticism.

[31] See Mitzka, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

[32] *Ep.* 22.17 (*CSEL* 54.165).

The praise which he bestows upon Paula, may deservedly be applied to him: She found her way through the trials and vicissitudes of life, guided by the words of Holy Scripture and drawing from them spiritual solace and strength.[33] Constantly Jerome leads his disciples to the Bible, which he wants to be their rule of life. There they will find the source of lasting joys of the spirit, which will compensate for the fleeting pleasures of the world. "Love the knowledge of the Scriptures," he tells Rusticus, "and you will not love the sins of the flesh."[34]

The Bible was to be the spiritual food of every Christian and ascetic, as he declares in the Commentary on Ecclesiastes: "The true food and drink, which is taken from the word of God, is the knowledge of the Scriptures."[35] He placed such great value on the Holy Scriptures that he did not conceive a follower of the perfect life who was not wholeheartedly devoted to them. It may be said that his sole study and meditation was the Bible, in which he tried to interest his fellow ascetics and all those who wished to dedicate themselves to a deeper spiritual life. No epithet can be more appropriately applied to Jerome than the one so felicitously coined by Campenhausen, who calls him "the theologian of Holy Scripture" (*Theologen der heiligen Schrift*).[36]

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[33] Ep. 108.18-19 (CSEL 55.329-334).

[34] Ep. 125.11 (CSEL 56.130).

[35] Comm. in Eccl. 3.12-13 (CC 72.278): "Verus enim cibus et potus, qui ex verbo Dei sumitur, scientia scripturarum est."

IV. Jerome's Love of Christ[37]

Jerome's biblical asceticism does not fully explain his deep love of the Sacred Scriptures. What then is ultimately the cause of his passionate love for the Bible? One word alone offers the final explanation: Christ. If Jerome possesses this intense love, it is due to his love for the Savior. He equates the knowledge of the Scriptures with the knowledge of Christ: "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ."[38] Herein one finds the key that reveals the whole secret of the two loves of the monk of Bethlehem: the love of the Bible and the love of the ascetic life. The Bible is for Jerome the incarnation of the word of God in human language; for him Christ is the very end of the *scientia scripturarum*; for him spiritual life cannot be conceived without the knowledge of the Scriptures, by which one attains the knowledge of Christ, Who is the life of every Christian and ascetic.[39] Antin thoughtfully observes: "His mystical life tends to Christ, and lives for us in the Scripture--another Eucharist."[40]

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[36] H. von Campenhausen, *Lateinischen Kirchenväter* (Stuttgart, 1960), p. 149.

[37] See also above, Chapter IV, 6(a).

[38] *Comm. in Esaiam*, Prologus (*CC* 78.1): "Ignoratio scripturarum, ignoratio Christi est."

[39] See Bonjorn, *op. cit.*, pp. 259-260.

"To be what Christ is"--"Esse quod Christus est."[41] In this sublime formula, already imparted to his disciples at Rome, is condensed Jerome's entire asceticism; it embraces his highest ideal of perfection. This ideal he concisely expresses in his letter to Pammachius: "This is my advice to you, my dear brother: dedicate yourself to Christ and imitate the Son of Man."[42]

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[40] P. Antin, "Jérôme (Saint)," Catholicisme, n. 24 (Paris, 1964), p. 74: "Sa vie mystique tend au Christ qui vit pour nous dans l'Ecriture, autre Eucharistie."

[41] Ep. 22.38 (CSEL 54.204).

[42] Ep. 66.12 (CSEL 54.662): "Haec moneo, frater carissime, ut . . . te ipsum Christo offeras . . . et imiteris filium hominis."

SUMMARY

In his ascetical writings Jerome presents the ascetic and the monk under various images. The concept of the ascetic as a soldier of Christ he sketches prominently at the very beginning of his own ascetic life, particularly in the letter to Heliodorus, which bears marked influence of Tertullian in the description of the *miles delicatus*. Inspired by the vision of the divine warrior of the Apocalypse, Jerome hails Christ as a commander-in-chief (*imperator*), in whose ranks the soldier of Christ must be prepared to take his proper place. To be victorious over his enemies the ascetic must don the complete spiritual armor presented to him by St. Paul. His victory over Satan is a victory of Christ Himself.

On a number of occasions St. Paul had compared the exertions of the Christian life to the various activities of the athletes in the arena. Following the example of the Apostle and the early Christian writers, Jerome compares the life of the ascetic to an athletic contest, in which the athlete of Christ must engage throughout his life. To the victor, Christ Himself, the divine superintendent (ἀγωνοθέτης), awards the crown of victory.

The concept of the ascetic life as equivalent to spiritual martyrdom is clearly taught by Jerome. Both the preservation of chastity and the practice of poverty involve a martyrdom. The whole ascetic life of Paula, for example, Jerome calls "a daily martyrdom" (martyrium cotidianum).

Finally, Jerome conceives the hermit or the ascetic as another inhabitant of Paradise (paradisi colonus). Like the first dweller in the garden of Eden, the ascetic in his solitude enjoys God's familiar presence.

According to Jerome the ideal ascetic is one who practices complete renunciation and perfect chastity. Influenced by the example of the threefold renunciation made by St. Anthony, Jerome gave up his family, his possessions, and the world and withdrew into the desert of Chalcis, where he followed a program of eremitic life. Already at that early period he began to teach the doctrine of complete renunciation, addressing himself exclusively to those who wished to become perfect.

In Jerome's view the ascetical renunciation is a logical consequence of the baptismal renunciation. The latter is a renunciation in spirit of the world, whereas the former, which Jerome designates as "the second step after baptism," is a renunciation de facto of the goods and freedoms of the world. Thus the ascetic's threefold renunciation becomes a sort of extension of his baptismal renunciation. After the giving up of his worldly possessions, the ascetic must rise toward detachment from all created things and to union with Christ by love and imitation. Only poverty out of love of Christ is true poverty.

It is clear that both for himself and for his disciples Jerome envisions salvation only in flight from the world and in complete sacrifice of worldly goods and pleasures. With "poverty in spirit" he is not satisfied, but demands real renunciation. Such is Jerome's basic concept of renunciation, which he himself put into practice. Its extreme severity requires that it be viewed in the light of the Christian motivation which he adduces in its support. He recognizes the hardship of such renunciation, but he sees nothing impossible in an act which the Apostles and others had made. The ascetic must not fear poverty practiced for the sake of Christ. Detached from all, he will be free from earthly fetters in his flight to Christ.

Jerome emphatically teaches that Christ is "the author and founder of virginity," for He dedicated to God in His own person the firstfruits of virginity and by His example proclaimed its excellence. Through her mystical nuptials, the virgin becomes the spouse of Christ. This is "the great mystery" (magnum sacramentum), by which Christ and the virgin are "of one spirit." Henceforth the Divine Bridegroom alone has the right to the undivided love and devotion of His spouse, who is another Ark of the Covenant, into which nothing defiled must ever be allowed to enter.

Jerome defines virginity in concrete terms: "A virgin is defined as one who is holy in body and in spirit," This concept is Pauline, expressing the ideal of virginity: spiritual and corporal. The ascetic becomes a "spiritual eunuch," who offers himself entirely to God as perfect burnt-offering and freely surrenders himself to the Lord. This very surrender and offering renders him a eunuch--unfit for the married life. Celibacy is the necessary result of a total dedication to the kingdom of heaven. Not everyone is capable of such a total dedication, for perfect chastity is a matter of grace and prayer. Jerome insists on "virginity in spirit" (*virginitas spiritu*), which means that corporal integrity must be accompanied by holiness of life. Virginity, once lost, cannot be restored, not even by God.

The life of perpetual chastity, which is an exceptionally heavy burden (*onus gravissimum castitatis*), the Creator left to our choice. The angelic life (*angelorum vita*), therefore, is not demanded of us, but recommended. Jerome emphasizes Christ's great love for those who become celibates for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Already on earth they live "the life of heaven" (*vitam caelestem*). Virginity is a heavenly perfection, an anticipation for those who embrace it of what will be the final destiny of all in the kingdom of heaven.

Virginity is a good absolutely, in itself (*bonum naturaliter*); marriage, however, though also a gift, is a good only in comparison with an evil, namely, sins of the flesh. Although he does not condemn marriage, Jerome proclaims his preference for virginity, which is the offspring of marriage. Virginity is the seed that produces the hundredfold harvest (*coronam virginitatis*). From the earliest days of mankind, virginity was sanctified by paradise, its true fatherland (*paradisus virginitatis*).

Finally, in the Church there is a diversity of gifts; among these is virginity, which is the object of grace. Virginity is the ultimate sacrificial offering of oneself to Christ, for the virgin offers herself entirely to the Lord as a holocaust.

By way of summary, then, the works of the perfect ascetic, according to Jerome, may be classified under four heads: mortification, *lectio divina*, the works of charity, and prayer.

1. Mortification

The fundamental ascetic doctrine of Jesus Christ is summed up in His exhortation to self-denial and mortification: "If anyone wishes to come after me . . . Matt. 16.24 ." Jerome also addressed the same exhortation to his own disciples, instructing them, moreover, on the Pauline doctrine of "putting off the old man" and "putting on the new man" (Eph. 4.22-24).

Among the penitential works of the ascetic, Jerome makes mention of the following: the wearing of the sackcloth (*saccus*), which was a sign of prayer and fasting as well as a weapon of penance; the use of the hairshirt (cilicium), which, though not prescribed, was recommended; and chameunia, that is, sleeping on the ground.

The principal works of penance for the ascetic, however, were abstinence and fasting. Jerome constantly urges his disciples to abstain from wine, meat, delicate foods, and worldly companionship. Concerning the use of wine he lays down the rule: "The spouse of Christ must avoid wine as she would avoid poison." Wine is the first weapon used by the demons against the young. By taking wine the young, he feels, add fuel to a body already ablaze with passion. Jerome's bold statement to Eustochium that wine was the "fuel of sensual pleasure" (incendium voluptatis) drew from his enemies the charge of rashness and even of heresy. Later, in the Commentaries on the Galatians and Ephesians, Jerome leaves no doubt concerning his genuine views on the use of wine. He condemns the evil effects of wine (opus vini), not wine itself as the creature of God. Unfortunately, in his libellus on virginity he makes no distinction between "drinking wine" and "being filled with wine," that is, "getting drunk." He simply quotes one part of the Pauline text (Eph. 5.18): vinum in quo est luxuria, which in his context implies a condemnation of the use of wine itself. Being so absorbed in safeguarding chastity, he at times substitutes rhetoric for logic.

Jerome recommends permanent abstinence both from wine and meat, because for the young they are an "incentive to sensual pleasures" (incentiva voluptatum). To confirm the practice of abstinence from meat, he distorts the Pauline text (Rom. 14.21), in which the Apostle warns against giving scandal: "It is good not to eat meat and not to drink wine."

Solitude is a great aid in the preservation of virginal fidelity. Hence Jerome counsels Eustochium: "Appear in public but seldom." The ascetic must shun the city crowds and even avoid the homes of aristocratic families. His cell should be both his desert (heremus) and his paradise (paradisus).

Jerome lays down the principle that fasting, though not a virtue in itself, is nevertheless the foundation of all virtues. It is the first step on the ladder of perfection. For the preservation of chastity fasting is absolutely essential. To the modern man some of Jerome's early regulations on fasting appear almost inhuman. As years go by an evolution takes place in his attitude toward fasting, and he begins to recommend moderate fasts to his disciples. He tells Laeta that he disapproves of long and excessive fasts, especially in the case of the young. Finally he warns Rusticus: "Let your fasts be moderate," and sums up his teaching on fasting: "A frugal, temperate diet is beneficial both to the body and the soul."

A glance at Jerome's lifetime practice of fasting reveals one clear fact: his own diet underwent an evolution. At first it was entirely excessive; later, when he led a cenobitic life at Bethlehem, it became less austere, permitting him to devote his energies to numerous scriptural and exegetical works.

Though he attaches so much importance to fasting, yet Jerome points out the primacy of the internal, spiritual element in fasting and strongly exhorts his disciples: "Let us rather abstain from vice than from food."

Jerome admits the hygienic value of fasting. According to him, Galen furnished the followers of asceticism with a scientific basis. Medicine is not to be despised. In case of sickness wine is permitted, for it was believed to possess medicinal qualities.

Jerome admits that his ascetical program of renunciation and mortification is difficult, but one thing will render it easy: the love of Christ: "Nothing is hard for lovers." Moreover, the true ascetic must be inspired by the example of the Son of God and of the saints, particularly St. Paul.

2. Lectio Divina

Another important activity of the ascetic is the reading of Sacred Scripture, and this is closely related to prayer. In Jerome's ascetic program, biblical reading must follow prayer and prayer must follow reading. In emulation of Origen, Jerome himself was an assiduous student of the word of God, and His enthusiasm for the study of the Bible glows throughout his whole ascetical life. Thus, he never tires of recommending Bible reading to his spiritual disciples. But the study of the sacred writings must, Jerome taught, be joined with piety, otherwise it remains sterile. His best pupils in these biblical studies at Rome were Marcella and Paula. Paula's love of Christ revealed itself in the passionate zeal which she brought to the reading and study of the Scriptures under Jerome's guidance.

In Roman times people read with the lips, pronouncing the words they saw, and with the ears, listening to the words pronounced. The _lectio_ was habitually an active reading. This manner of reading was continued in patristic times. Thus the readers heard what they called "the voices of the pages." The _lectio_ was very close to _meditatio_. Thus three phases of the same activity were combined in the _lectio_: audible reading, reflection of the mind, and exercise of the memory. Jerome introduces a fourth element: the element of good works. Meditation on the law of the Lord must not consist in mere reading; it must move the will to action.

The reading and meditation of the divine words is at times described by Jerome by the use of the theme of spiritual food and nutrition. The knowledge of the Scriptures--this is the soul's true food and drink, its heavenly bread.

According to Jerome scriptural education to be efficient must begin quite early. Therefore, in his letter to Laeta he outlines a program of studies in which Sacred Scripture is the alpha and omega. He repeats the same curriculum to Gaudentius, but counsels that his young daughter be rewarded for doing well in her scriptural studies.

It was Jerome's firm conviction that familiarity with the Holy Scriptures was the royal road to the knowledge and love of Christ. In fact, he did not hesitate to say: "Ignoratio scripturarum, ignoratio Christi est." From his love of Christ sprang his love of the Church, Christ's mystical Spouse. Since the Head can never be separated from His Mystical Body, so too love of Christ must ever be associated with zeal for His Church. Finally, love for the sacred learning will detach the soul of the ascetic from earthly things and sins of the flesh.

3. Works of Charity

The principal works of charity practiced or promoted by Jerome or his disciples were the following: (a) hospitality, (b) care of the sick, (c) preaching, and (d) almsgiving. At the close of the fourth century two of Jerome's disciples, Pammachius and Fabiola, carried out heroic works of charity and hospitality at Rome. Pooling their resources, they established a large hospice at the mouth of the Tiber, where they relieved the misery of the destitute and offered hospitality to crowds of pilgrims. Again, with Paula's help, Jerome built a monastery outside of Bethlehem, while Paula built a convent and a hospice for pilgrims. In the case of Jerome the duty of hospitality often became a heavy burden, but no sacrifice could deter him from continuing "the service of hospitality toward the saints (sanctorum ministerium)."

Fabiola founded a public hospital to which she admitted the sick of Rome. Jerome vividly describes her zeal and charity as she nursed the bodies of those who were worn out by sickness and hunger.

Every day Jerome commented on the Sacred Scriptures, particularly the psalms, for the benefit of his monks. Very different from the impetuous Jerome is the Jerome of these homilies. With tenderness and constancy he exhorts his monks to virtue, especially to fraternal charity.

Finally, Jerome stresses the necessity of a right intention in almsgiving. Everytime they hold out their hand, he tells his disciples, they must think of Christ, for it is the Lord Himself Who asks alms. He cautions them against unworthy motives of almsgiving; above all they must not give out of a desire for human praise or ostentation. Giving alms out of pity for the needy is not enough; we must imitate the compassionate kindness of Christ. Among the special benefits which one can derive from almsgiving Jerome mentions atonement for sins.

4. Prayer

In the Gospels Jesus teaches by precept and example that prayer is an essential part of Christian life. The

Apostles learned from Christ Himself how to pray, and St. Paul re-echoes the teaching of Christ on incessant prayer. Prayer was at all times one of the principal occupations of the ascetic. Jerome too assigns to prayer a prominent place among the ascetic observances. According to him, the prayer of the Christians, who speak to God as to their Father, is based primarily on their divine sonship. He considers prayer a lifting up of the soul to God, a direct and intimate conversation between Christ and the ascetic. He frequently insists on the continuity of prayer. To his disciples, some of whom observed the practice of continuous prayer in an heroic manner, he also prescribed nocturnal prayer. All the daily actions of the ascetic--even indifferent ones--should be united with prayer. To praise God assiduously is to practice what the saints will do in heaven together with the angels.

Finally, prayer to Jesus forms one of the important elements in Jerome's personal piety. He has recourse to Christ in temporal and spiritual needs and anxieties. Many of his letters close with various formulas of petition to Christ. He hopes for help from his prayer to Jesus particularly when he is about to explain the words of Sacred Scripture.

For Jerome ascetical life is a spiritual search--a continuous search after Jesus. Before finding Jesus, the soul is weak and inconstant; once He is found, the soul, now strong and brave, continually grows in perfection. To illustrate the progress and ascent of the ascetic in the spiritual life, Jerome avails himself of the symbol of Jacob's ladder (scalam Iacob), which, according to him, consists of fifteen rungs, symbolizing the virtues which guide the ascetic to the heights of heaven. He admits that it is very difficult to ascend from earth to heaven. However, the athlete of Christ must not give up hope, though the climb is arduous. At each step he must beg Christ for help. For Jerome the goal of the ascetic life is a life of intimate union with Jesus, and to this union he earnestly guides ascetic souls. In the ascetical works of Jerome we not only see a summation of all the ascetical principles of the early Church, especially those of the West, we can also glimpse the formation of the vast monastic tradition which was to blossom with the great religious orders of the Middle Ages under the inspiration of Benedict and Cassiodorus.

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The Ascetical Doctrine of Saint Jerome
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The purpose of the present study is to investigate the ascetical doctrine of St. Jerome as found in his principal ascetic writings: his *Epistulae*, the various *Opuscula*, the *Homiliae*, and the monastic *Vitae*.

Jerome presents the ascetic under various images, conceiving him as a soldier of Christ, an athlete of Christ, a martyr of Christ, and an inhabitant of Paradise. According to Jerome the ideal ascetic is one who practices complete renunciation and perfect chastity. In his view the ascetical renunciation is a logical consequence of the baptismal renunciation. The latter is renunciation *in spirit* of the world, whereas the former is renunciation *de facto* of the goods and freedoms of the world. Thus the ascetic's threefold renunciation becomes a sort of extension of his baptismal renunciation. With "poverty in spirit" Jerome is not satisfied, but demands real renunciation. He recognizes the hardship of such a renunciation and urges the ascetic to practice it for the sake of Christ.

Through her mystical nuptials, the virgin becomes "the spouse of Christ," Who is "the author and founder of virginity." This is the great mystery (*magnum mysterium*),

by which Christ and the virgin are "of one spirit." Jerome defines virginity in concrete terms: "A virgin is defined as one who is holy in body and in spirit." This Pauline concept expresses the ideal of virginity: spiritual and corporal. The ascetic becomes a "spiritual eunuch," who offers himself entirely to God as a perfect burnt-offering and freely surrenders himself to the Lord. Jerome insists on "virginity in spirit" (virginitas spiritu), which means that corporal integrity must be accompanied by holiness of life. The life of perpetual chastity is an anticipation of what will be the final destiny of all in the kingdom of heaven. Although he does not condemn marriage, Jerome proclaims his preference for virginity, which is the offspring of marriage and the seed that produces the hundredfold harvest.

The works of the ascetic may be classified under four heads: mortification, lectio divina, the works of charity, and prayer. Among the penitential works of the ascetic, Jerome mentions the following: the wearing of the sackcloth (saccus), the use of the hairshirt (cilicium), and sleeping on hard ground (chameunia). The principal ascetic works of penance, however, are abstinence and fasting. Jerome urges his disciples to abstain from wine, meat, delicate foods, and worldly companionship. He condemns the evil effects of wine (opus vini), but not wine itself. He points out the primacy of the internal, spiritual element in fasting though admitting also its hygienic value. In Jerome's ascetic program, the reading of the Scriptures (lectio divina) must follow prayer and prayer must follow reading. Familiarity with the Scriptures is for Jerome the royal road to the knowledge and love of Christ.

The principal works of charity practiced and promoted by Jerome are: hospitality, care of the sick, preaching, and almsgiving. Indeed, works of charity were one of the most prominent effects of St. Jerome and his circle, not only at Rome but also especially during his stay at Bethlehem. To prayer, which he considers an intimate conversation between Christ and the ascetic, he assigns a prominent place among the ascetic observances. For Jerome the ascetical life is a spiritual search after Jesus culminating in a life of intimate union with Him.

Though not a great theologian, and despite his own acidulous temperament, Jerome nevertheless lays down sound theological principles, which serve as a foundation for his ascetical teaching. Above all, Hieronymian asceticism is fundamentally biblical. The intense love of the Scriptures leads both the spiritual director and his disciples to an intense love of Christ. Herein one finds the key that reveals the whole secret of the two great loves of the Monk of Bethlehem: the love of the Bible and the love of the ascetic life.

VITA

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